HARMONIA

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'ESTELLE RUSSELL'

[Mary ALLAN-OLNEY]

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HARMONIA: A CHRONICLE

VOL. I.

HARMONIA

A Chronicle

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ESTELLE RUSSELL," "JUNIA," "THE NEW VIRGINIANS"
"THE PRIVATE LIFE OF GALILEO," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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HARMONIA: A CHRONICLE.

CHAPTER I.

PILGRIMS.

ONE summer's day two travellers rode together through a forest in the New World.

It was high noon. The birds, whose love symphonies had filled the air since early dawn, had been silent for the last hour; even the hum of the wild bees, and the tree wasps and hornets had become less resonant. Only the jar-fly kept up its shrill, unearthly rattle, as though it gained fresh vigour from a degree of heat which disposed the rest of the animate world to silence. The squirrels had ceased barking at one another, and were basking, lazy and somnolent, in the forks of the tallest trees. Now and again, in the far distance, the harsh note of the vigilant crow might be heard, telling the travellers, had they ears to hear it, of the whereabouts of a human habitation and cultivated ground.

Let us describe the two travellers.

They were young; they were full of health and hope;

they were of good stock, according to Old World notions; and they were husband and wife. Their names were Harry and Edith Tregellas, and they had little in the world besides each other. Edith's maiden name was de Glanvile, and she had been an orphan for some years.

They had hardly as yet got beyond the bridal stage of existence. He was in her eyes divinely handsome, and in his eyes she was of ethereal loveliness. The world in general would have chosen more sober epithets in describing them, unless, indeed, they had been such great personages as those who are mentioned in the *Almanach de Gotha.*

Harry Tregellas was a good-looking fellow, of middle height, full-chested, broad-shouldered, and sinewy. His forehead was broad rather than high, and it had a wrinkle in it which, however, disappeared when he smiled. He had a fine pair of hazel eyes; but it must be understood at once that they were eyes which neither pierced, nor gleamed, nor flashed lightnings, nor shot forth glances, malevolent or otherwise. They were eyes which looked frankly and fairly at his fellow-men, and lovingly into the eyes of his wife. Edith thought his eyes were the softest and loveliest that had ever been created, but then Edith was in love with him, and we are not. Edith, too, had a high opinion of his nose. It was undeniably a good nose, without being either Greek or Roman or aquiline. It was a straight, well-cut nose, with a broad base. If noses can give a clue to the character of their possessors, one might say that Harry Tregellas could not do a mean thing to save

his life. Perhaps the shape of his nose, and the classic curve of his eyebrows, helped to give him an appearance of settled gravity beyond his years, so that he looked nearer thirty than five-and-twenty. His mouth was hidden by a brown moustache and beard of recent growth. His complexion, originally fair, had been tanned to a ruddy brown by exposure to the weather. For he had been third lieutenant on board H.M.S. *Centaur*, which had not long been paid off, and he had been afloat in one ship or another ever since passing out of the *Britannia*, with the character of being the most "dependable" boy in the ship.

It has been said that Edith was not, except in her husband's eyes, ethereally lovely. She was beautiful, but it was the kind of beauty that wears well. Her complexion was neither that of the lily, the rose, the peach, nor of any other known flower or fruit, but of a healthy Devonshire maiden, who was accustomed to rise early and take long walks and rides, and who could swim a little and row a little, and disport herself in the sun and wind without fear of freckles spoiling the pink and white of her complexion. But just now her face was somewhat tanned by the sea voyage, and by exposure to a fiercer sun than that which shines on the fair daughters of the west country. Her face was rather long, and her nose slightly aquiline. She had grey eyes with dark eyebrows and eyelashes, and her pretty brown hair was all her own, and was fastened in a simple knot at the back of her head. As the heat of the day became more intense, she often lifted her hat to cool her forehead. When she did so, a faint line was

visible, as if Time had begun to mark a wrinkle, and then relenting, had effaced it.

It was noon, and for many a mile the husband and wife had ridden slowly in Indian file. For the road, hardly, when at its best, to be called a road in the English sense, had long since become a mere track, with obstacles to rapid progress scattered over it in the shape of frequent rocks and boulders, and the stumps of trees cut knee high, and not yet decayed. Sometimes a seedling walnut or dogwood or andromeda grew in the middle of the track, or a sprout, already as thick as a man's wrist, rose close to the jagged trunk which had been hewn down when the path was first made.

On the higher slopes the soil was mostly gravelly. Whenever there was a dip in the ground, the increased vigour of the tree-growth, and the density of the underwood, told of the store of collected alluvium. Here, too, would be swampy places, showing where surface springs sought vainly for outlet. Frequently the path would be obstructed by a fallen tree. Of these, some were half decayed and crumbling away; some were only hollow, tenanted by wild bees or long-horned beetles; while others, freshly fallen, lay with roots upturned, and soil clinging to the torn fibres, their foliage still green and lustrous.

Through paths such as this Tregellas and his wife had ridden for two days, preferring this mode of progression, slow though it might be, to an uncertain interval of waiting at a rough, shanty-like building, which was dubbed the Relay House, near the place where a sudden rising of the waters of an innocent-

looking creek had carried away a trestle bridge on the line of the new railway by which they were travelling southward.

They had now reached a labyrinthine region of densely wooded hills, almost high enough to deserve the name of mountains; a region where swift streams in spring become dry water-courses in summer, water-courses broad enough and stony enough to serve as roads, should roads be needed. Here, wherever the space between the hills widened, the tree-growth became magnificent; the tulip tree, the catalpa, the magnolia, clung to the banks of the purling brooks; rhododendrons and kalmias covered the northward slopes and nestled in rocky spring-fed hollows; while the drier ground was occupied by andromedas, dogwoods, red bud, and other beautiful flowering trees and shrubs, luxuriant in the half shade afforded by the wide-spreading crown of an occasional tall pine.

These hills and valleys had been, as yet, scarcely touched by the hand of man. They had been surveyed at a period not yet remote, and had been divided into counties in square parcels of thirty miles or thereabouts each way. Some of these counties possessed, besides a name, a county seat consisting of a store, a blacksmith's shop (generally shut), a whiskey shanty, and perhaps a meeting-house. Other counties had only the county town on the surveyor's map; while others again, on the higher slopes of the mountains, were little more than preserves for the bear, the deer, and the mountain cat. At rare intervals, as, for instance, where a clear spring bubbled invitingly from beneath a rock or a tree, a

clearing might be seen, the nucleus perhaps of a future village, or even of a flourishing city. These clearings in the heart of the mountain solitudes were a picturesque and grateful sight, with their little patches of young corn waving in the wind, and their tender pumpkin plants spreading in the open spaces where the stumps of the felled trees stood, turning grey under the sun and the semi-tropical rains, and looking from a distance like some old, forgotten graveyard invaded by an alien vegetation.

But such clearings were rare. They were rarer to-day than yesterday, for the travellers had only passed one between sunrise and noon. The rough cabins of these pioneers, always built close to a spring, were made of the trunks of the trees which had been hewn down to make the clearing. They were guarded by lanky curs which snarled at the peaceful travellers, and pursued them with unreasoning wrath, while the unkempt mothers and tow-headed children of these primitive households stood gazing in dull wonder at the strange sight of a couple of well-dressed people passing by.

But now the path began to descend abruptly, and its difficulties became positive rather than negative. At length the riders found themselves in a deep ditch with a ridge in the middle, and on either side a bank many feet high. Presently the ditch widened into a gully, which soon became a slough with a pool of muddy water in its midst. The horses—patient beasts—accustomed to take all things as they came and make the best of them, even of a road like this—plodded on with equine good humour. The road still continued to

descend, becoming at every step less like a road and more like the bed of a lately swollen torrent.

Presently there was a laugh from Tregellas, and a sound of dismay from Edith. She had been riding in front, and now as she looked back she too began to laugh. Her hat, round which she had twisted a grey silk puggaree as a protection from the heat, had been taken off her head by a projecting bough, and hung, swinging backwards and forwards, over a pool of water.

"What shall I do?" she cried laughing, as she stretched out her arm in vain.

"I have been expecting that all the morning," said her husband.

His horse was an experienced animal of uncertain age, warranted not to shy at anything; not even at a ghost. He was as obstinate as a mule, and as stolid as his late master, the mountaineer, of whom Tregellas had bought him. But his stolidity was not proof against such an unexpected phenomenon as this. A big bush standing in the midst of the way was good to brush the flies off; a fallen trunk could be stepped over; a snake was not to be treated with mere contempt, yet a snake was usually in as great a hurry to get away as a horse could be in to get away from it. Rocks, and sloughs, and pits, and ground wasps, were drawbacks to equanimity; yet they were, so to speak, in the day's work. But a black hat dangling to and fro like an enormous nest of an unknown bird at the end of a long bough, was more than a country-bred horse could stand without betraying emotion. This horse showed his emotion by

shying; and there being but little room for that gymnastic exercise, he stumbled against the bank sideways, and grazed his rider's leg.

"Now then," said Tregellas, in tones of remonstrance; "now then, you son of a gun!"

He coaxed the snorting, trembling brute till he got within reach of the hat. When he had caught it, he showed it to the horse and made him smell it. Edith, who was watching him from the other side of the pool, remarked that that horse was a great deal too old to be educated. "Better late than never," Tregellas answered as he handed the hat to her. She put out her hand to take it with such a sweet smile that he could not help bending over and kissing her.

"Harry!" she exclaimed, taken aback. "Suppose any one should see you!"

"Suppose they did, what then?" quoth he.

"What would they think?" quoth she.

"They might think they saw a man kissing his wife."

"They might think something quite different."

"*Honi soit qui mal y pense.* Here have I been flattering myself that I was beginning to look exactly like an old married man."

Edith laughed. "As much as I look like an old married woman! Only three days ago, at that place where we stopped, Centreville, was it?—the hotel clerk asked if we would not prefer a private room to eat our supper in. I never was so annoyed in my life!"

"I remember. You blushed like a red, red rose, and

you looked so pretty that the negro waiters stared at you open-mouthed as you went up stairs."

"Horrid creatures!"

"Your own fault altogether. If you will look so like a bride, you know——"

Edith smiled divinely at her husband. "A fault that will mend every day," she said.

"Just listen to that bird," said he. "I'm not imaginative, or poetical, or anything of that sort, but that bird is saying as plainly as can be, 'Kiss her, kiss her, kiss her again.'"

It was a bobolink which, finding the recess in the "parliament of foules" of too long duration, was entering his protest in an *aria impromptu prestissimo.*

"'Kiss her, kiss her, kiss her again.' Shall I?"

The wife blew her husband a kiss and rode on, with a bright pink flush in her cheeks that made her look very girlish and very lovely as long as it lasted.

Soon after this, the road still descending, they reached the banks of a shallow stream, where they dismounted. Tregellas took some ears of Indian corn from his saddle-bags and fed the horses, while Edith spread out on the sandy brink some provisions which she drew from a wallet hanging at her pommel.

Sitting side by side on a fallen tree, they ate their simple meal of bread, cheese, and fruits; such as might have formed the repast of a Gesnerian Daphnis and Chloe in those pseudo-classic Swiss idylls which were the delight of our grandmothers. When Tregellas's hunger was appeased, he asked Edith what day it was. Edith replied that it was Thursday. Tregellas said he

knew that, but he had forgotten the day of the month.

"It is the fourteenth," she answered softly, with a shy smile at her husband.

"The fourteenth! By Jove, then, Edith, we have been married three whole months. I suppose our honeymoon must be considered quite over."

"Must it?" She drooped her head a little. "If you say so, I suppose it is so."

Tregellas repeated, "Three months! Actually three months!" And he mused on this fact with a smile of wonder. Then he said, "And are you not tired of me yet?"

"Tired!" She lifted her eyes to his with loving reproach. "Tired of being the happiest woman in the world!"

"Then you don't think you made such a bad bargain, after all?" said Tregellas after an interval.

"Oh, Harry, what an unbelieving Thomas you are! Have I not told you that you opened the gates of Paradise to me? That I only seem to have begun to live since I knew you belonged to me, and I to you. Is it possible you doubt the truth of what I say, even yet?"

"I should be a wretch if I did," he replied promptly. "But if you only knew the wigging I had from your Aunt Rachel the night before we sailed! By Jove, whenever I happen to think of it I'm all in a blue funk."

"I had my wigging too," said Edith with a happy laugh. "But I was accustomed to wiggings and you

were not. My last wigging was only a variation on those which had gone before, and I confess that I was so happy at the thought that you were not going to America without me, that all she said went in at one ear and out at the other. I believe she thought me quite heartless. All the time she was talking I kept on wondering whether she had ever been in love when she was young. Poor Aunt Rachel!"

"Rich Aunt Rachel!"

"No, Harry. Very, very poor, if she does not know what it is to love as I love, and to be loved as you love me."

"So you are not afraid of being poor—really?"

"Not as long as you love me, Harry."

"Then you need never be afraid."

"You forget, Harry, that poverty and I are old acquaintances. My father and mother lived and died poor; yet they were very happy together. Sometimes, when Aunt Rachel would utter her wise sayings about girls not marrying unless they could have a handsome income settled on them, I used to think of what my mother said."

"Tell me what she said, darling?" said Tregellas, taking her hand.

"It was this. 'Never marry a man unless you love him. So many trials come with marriage that a woman wants all the love she can give, and all she can get, to make her life endurable.'"

"I hope," said Tregellas gravely, "that you will never find me trying."

Edith answered with equal gravity that she hoped

that neither would he find her trying. She paused, and then said :—"If you ever do, I think I know how it will be. I shall love you too much, and you will get tired of it."

Tregellas asked, who was doubting Thomas now? The talk which ensued was so very lover-like that it need not be set down. Each one may imagine for himself what a young husband was likely to say to such a speech as Edith's. After an hour or so they came back to practical life, and Tregellas said they must be moving on, else they might find themselves far from a shelter when nightfall came.

Towards evening they reached a broad plateau, bounded on either hand by a stretch of gently undulating country, and on the west by a mountain range, now overhung by low gathering clouds behind which the sun was setting. In the distance a thin curl of blue smoke ascended, and Tregellas, looking around with the steady, comprehensive glance of a man used to scanning distant horizons, said that that smoke must be at Pringle's house, where they had been told that they might perhaps get a lodging for the night.

The horses, as if warned by instinct that they were near the end of their day's work, pricked up their ears and voluntarily mended their pace. The sun was setting when they reached a clearing and stopped at the inclosure of rough rails within which the cabin stood. The door stood open, and a young pig and some fowls were inside, gathering up unconsidered morsels from the earthen floor. Presently a child came and drove them out. Tregellas called the child, but it

looked askance and ran away. Dismounting, he gave his wife the reins to hold, and, leaping over the fence, went up to the door. As his figure darkened the doorway, a man who had been stooping by the hearth reached for his gun, which stood against the rude mantlepiece, and then, still kneeling on one knee, turned slowly and looked at the stranger.

Tregellas, who had seen the man's action, thought to himself, "A rough lot, but there's no help for it." Then he bade the man good evening, and asked whether he and his wife and their horses could be accommodated for the night.

The man rose slowly and gave Tregellas a long look before he answered.

"Derned ef I didn't take ye for a tramp. Derned ef I didn't, now," he said, with great deliberation.

From the slowness of his speech, he might have been judged to be stupid, but for his face, in which every feature was sharp, as though his whole life had been passed on the alert. His glance was keen as a hawk's, and his thin lips expressed volumes of silent cunning. Tregellas, who was unarmed, stood and looked at him calmly. He knew that he presented an excellent mark, but he did not believe the man intended to shoot him, at least not while there was a lady in sight.

"Derned ef I didn't take ye for a tramp; derned ef I didn't, now," the man repeated slowly. And again he said in an undertone, "Derned ef I didn't."

"Do tramps go on horseback in this country?" Tregellas asked.

There was a pause. "Reckon they mout, ef they

took (*i.e.* stole) 'em," said the man at last with caution.

"Well," said Tregellas, 'I'll leave it to your judgment whether or not I look like a tramp. I am travelling with my wife to the Deercreek settlement, and I am quite willing to pay my way. Indeed, I would not trespass on your hospitality otherwise. I was told at Centreville that a—a gentleman"—he emphasized the word—"named Pringle sometimes gave shelter to benighted travellers, and I thought it likely you were he."

The man rubbed his chin and his bristly, ill-cut beard for a moment before he replied:

"Yes, sir, Pringle is my name." Then he added, "We ain't got much room, an' that's a fac'."

"We must put up with what you can give us," said Tregellas.

"Wal," said the man, still with a reflective rubbing of the chin, "I reckon you kin come in. The old lady is gone to cupping, but she's most done by now." Then, as though his doubts had vanished, he added, in a more cordial tone, "Come in!"

"Thanks," said Tregellas, who still stood in the doorway. "If you will allow me, I will bring my wife in, and then I will see to the horses."

There was a cradle in the darkest corner of the room. Tregellas had not observed it, but it was the first thing Edith saw on entering. Before the woman of the house appeared she had made friends with the children, with the help of some sweetmeats, and had taken the whimpering, sickly-looking baby on her knee.

Seeing their mother, the children ran forward to

show the half-consumed sweetmeat. "See my candy!" cried three shrill little voices.

The woman stood still, with her small milk pail in her hand. "Wal, I do admire!" she said, under her breath. Then she advanced, bade Edith good evening, in a feeble, high-keyed voice, and added, as if by afterthought, "I'm Mis' Pringle."

Setting her milk pail on the table, she took off her cotton sun-bonnet, and used it as a fan. Out of the shadow of the overhanging bonnet, her face appeared without a trace of colour. Young in feature; not ill-favoured, yet with a weird look of age in the wrinkling forehead and down-drawn mouth that was pitiable to see.

The baby whimpered louder on seeing her. She took it, though Edith begged to be allowed to keep it; and presently began to prepare the supper with one hand, holding the child with the other. Edith observed that she feared their staying the night would be inconvenient.

"No, 'm, I reckon not," was the reply, in the same high-pitched tone. "This is the first time a lady ever come this way, I allow. We've had gentlemen here befo'."

Edith explained that their railway journey had been stopped by the washing away of a bridge during the storm, three days before, and that she and her husband had preferred riding across country to Deercreek, to waiting at a country hotel while the bridge was being repaired.

Mrs. Pringle went to one corner of the room where stood a barrel and kegs of various sizes. Taking some

Indian meal from the barrel, she placed it on a sieve, and was doing her best to sift it into a wooden tray with one hand, when Edith offered to do it for her, or hold the baby while she did it.

"I dunno as he would go to you," Mrs. Pringle said reluctantly. "His teeth have begun to pester him right smartly, and he won't keep quiet whenever he sees me, unless I take him up. And when he does holler, seems like his voice goes through my head."

"Let me make the dough," said Edith. "I suppose sifting meal is the same thing as sifting flour."

"Reckon so," said Mrs. Pringle, as she sank into the rocking-chair near the hearth. After watching Edith a little while she remarked: "Reckon you warn't raised to make yer own bread?"

"No," said Edith with a smile.

"Wal, I do admire," said Mrs. Pringle, after a pause, during which she had watched Edith's attempts to give the dough consistency. "Reckon you'd better let me fix it. Them'll be nohow sort o' pones else."

"I dare say," said Edith. "If it were pound cake I could manage better."

"You kin make pound cake!" said Mrs. Pringle with a trace of animation in her voice. "Lor'! It seems to me the longest time since I eat pound cake. Ma used ter make 'em. Seems like I've hardly seen one since I went to housekeeping."

She sighed wearily, put the baby into its cradle, and addressed herself to the making up of the "corn pones."

"You see, Mat—that's my husband—he won't do without his coffee. An' then I hev to get calico for the

children, an' a pa'r shoes for myself once in a while. An' in winter when eggs is worth somethin', my hens won't lay much. An' las' year a mink got in an' killed all my chickens, an' I had to do without shoes; an' Mat, he had to do without his coffee. An' the cow, she eat somethin' or 'nuther—"

She stopped in the narration of her troubles to rake out the hot embers in front of the hearth. On these—first covering them with ashes—she placed the corn cakes, and then covered them with more of the ashes, with coals on top.

"Yes," she resumed, when she had cut some lumps of rusty bacon from a piece that hung at a nail in the wall. "Yes 'm, she sut'nly did eat somethin' or 'nuther. I 'llowed 'twas poison oak, but Mat, he 'llowed 'twas ivy. Anyhow, we had powerful bad luck last year."

Edith by this time had coaxed the youngest toddler to her knee. In the intervals of attention required by the frying-pan and the coffee-boiler, Mrs. Pringle eyed her attempts to amuse the child with a languid curiosity.

"Got any of yer own?" she inquired.

Edith answered blushing, that she had not been married very long.

"Ah, 'tis all to come upon ye, I reckon," said Mrs. Pringle. "Lucky for us, the Lord in gineral only sends us one at a time. I've been married seven years, an' I've had six of 'em. But I only got twins once."

Edith looked round. There were only four little unkempt creatures visible.

"I buried two," said Mrs. Pringle in response to her look. "That was befo' we moved up here."

The apathy of her tone struck a chill through Edith. She asked herself if it were possible that women such as this one possessed the maternal instinct only as far as the lower animals possessed it. Was the all-absorbing, all-pervading mother love, on which poets and essayists discoursed so mellifluously, merely a product of the hyper-sensibility induced by an excess of civilization; like neuralgia, hysteria, and the craze for blue china and pseudo-Japanese decorations?

"So you're goin' to Deercreek," said Mrs. Pringle presently. "We had two men here, night 'fo' las', said they was goin' over thar. There was one as carried a tin satchel on his back, an' he thought a heap of it: he wouldn't hardly let go of it while he was eatin'. An' it was jes' as full of bugs!"

Edith exclaimed.

Mrs. Pringle went on: "Yes'm. Thar was every kind of bug I've ever seen in my life, an' a heap mo'. An' he give my Polly a quarter, to let him hev a big bug she found in an old, old stump down to the spring. Polly's allays picking up bugs to play with. This was a powerful big one, 'mos' as big's my thumb. An' that man did sut'nly think a heap o' that old bug. Says he, 'I haven't had such a piece of luck for a month.' An' he told Polly to find him another, and he'd give her another quarter. I sut'nly did laugh after he was gone. The man that was with him said he was a menister, an' so he mout be. But Mat 'llowed he was the other man's keeper. I wonder if they've got many of them yet to Deercreek. Seems like I wouldn't like to live over thar."

Edith asked why.

Mrs. Pringle shook her head. "Too many crazy folk for my use. I heerd they was fixin' up a hotel for 'em an' a big place for 'em to play games, so 's to keep 'em out o' mischief. So you are goin' over thar?"

"Yes. But what makes you suppose there are crazy people there, more than in any other place?"

"Wal, I dunno. We all sorter 'llowed 'twas a settlement for crazy folk. I s'pose crazy folk's got to be somewhers. I thought maybe you was goin' to run a bo'din' house for 'em. They say thar's a crowd of 'em comin' along, an' the ho-tel's got so full, they's 'bleeged to hev bo'din' houses. An' thar's a sawmill workin' all the time. I know that, 'cos the gentleman that owns it is kin to Mat. They all say he's wuth a sight o' money, an' I tell Mat sometimes I wish a little of it would come my way. Mr. Flippoto he's called. If you are goin' to settle to Deercreek maybe you'll get 'cquainted."

By this time supper was ready and the children were sent to call their father and the stranger guest. Mat Pringle came in, putting on his coat as he entered, and bade his guests be seated. Before dispensing the food he went through a long, incoherent grace with his eyes shut. Edith tried in vain to eat the rusty bacon and drink the coarse, black, overboiled coffee, sweetened with sorghum molasses from a fly-marked jug. In honour of guests who were paying their way, Mrs. Pringle had made two kinds of bread—that which had been baked in the ashes, and a mixture of flour and Indian meal, which she had fried in the rancid bacon fat, and which, to judge by the way in which her family devoured them, were in that region considered

a delicacy. They called them flapjacks, she said, as she pressed Edith to partake.

"Folks say these eat a sight better'n ash-cakes," she observed. Edith who tried in vain to eat, wondered to see her husband eat these coarse messes with apparent content. Mat Pringle observed with a short laugh that he reckoned the lady was raised on biscuit and fried chicken. Mrs. Pringle apologized for the absence of chicken. The chickens had not gone to roost when she began "fixing" supper. "I kin get you one now if you'd like," she said in a tone of unwilling concession. "I wouldn't be any time fixin' it." But Edith hastily declined, and the supper proceeded. Mrs. Pringle drank black coffee with "long sweetenin'," as she called the sorghum molasses; but she scarcely ate anything. The man bolted his food, and the children munched bits of ash-cake and flapjack dipped in molasses and rancid fat. Edith no longer wondered why the whole family looked dyspeptic and unhappy. She ventured to ask for a glass of fresh milk and it was brought after some slight demur on Mrs. Pringle's part. They always drank butter-milk, she informed Edith. Doctors said sweet milk wasn't wholesome. She "admired" to see Edith drink it, and warned her that she would have the "dyspepsy." And wouldn't a pinch of soda help it mightily? She often took a pinch of soda herself in summer time: and she suited the action to the word.

The guest chamber was a loft formed by boards laid roughly across the walls of the cabin, and was reached by a ladder equally rough. On a heap of corn shucks in one corner a straw mattress was laid with a patch-

work coverlet over it. Tregellas, accustomed to take naps on a sea chest or a soft plank, declared the bed first-rate, took off his coat and boots, made a pillow of them, and was asleep in two minutes.

But Edith lay awake a long time, watching the stars through the apertures of the ill-made roof. This was her first experience of roughing it in America. She was overtired, for the day had been a very long one, as well as very hot: and the coarse, ill-flavoured food had taken away her appetite. Yet, when she thought how shocked her aunts—especially Aunt Rachel—would be, could they but peep into her present sleeping apartment, she forgot her disgust and fatigue and laughed silently. Would she exchange the husband who loved her for the prettiest house in England and double her aunts' money?

A thousand times no! was her answer.

CHAPTER II.

DEERCREEK.

EARLY the next morning the travellers went their way. Mrs. Pringle, with her baby on her arm and a couple of children dragging at her skirts, stood with one hand shading the sun from her eyes, as she watched Edith's receding figure. Then with a sigh of weariness she turned to her household tasks. She had safe in her pocket the dollar Edith had put into her hand, as she bade her good-bye, and she was already turning over in her mind ways and means of getting that dollar exchanged for some yards of printed calico at the store, eight miles off. Mat, she took it for granted, had been paid for the guests' board and lodging and the horses' feed. She would have liked to know how much, but did not venture to inquire, as she knew she should be told roughly to mind her own business, and perhaps Mat would be in the sulks for a day or two because of the inquiry. She was conscious of a dim longing to possess that money; not for herself —she never dreamt of the possibility of such a thing— but for the children. When the crazy man with the

satchel and his companion lodged for a night with them, Mat had gone off soon after their departure, taking his gun and one of the dogs, and he had not returned for three days, though the dog, wiser than his master, came in at supper-time. It had appeared from something said afterwards, that all the time he had not been farther from home than twelve miles. He had gone, by a short cut over the hills, to the whiskey shanty at Deercreek, and had stayed there with some friends, treating and being treated, till none of them had any money left.

Mat Pringle stood for a moment looking at Tregellas and his wife. Then, as the trees hid them from sight, he turned on his heel with a scowl and entered the cabin. When Mrs. Pringle went in he was busy cleaning his gun. He looked up and said:—

"We'll hev to move ef this goes on."

"Move?" Mrs. Pringle answered, with an added touch of querulousness in her high-pitched voice. "Move? What for? We've moved three times already. I am 'most tired movin'."

"Shucks! Tired movin'! That ain't no way to talk."

"I am tired movin', an' mighty tired; an' that's a fac'," his wife insisted.

"Now look'ee here, Judy Jane," said Mat, bringing the stock of his gun down on the ground to emphasize his words, "I'm boun' to hev deer to hunt. Ain't I?"

"Wal', 'spose you is. Never said you warn't."

"Wal, ef thar's goin' to be a ceety, or a 'cademy, or a

place for lunies, or whatsomever it is, built 'way up yonder, that will bring folks."

"Wal, I shouldn't wonder."

"I don't want no folks hyar, a-pesterin' me," said Mat, with slow emphasis. "Ef Deercreek does git settled up, folks 'll be goin' around in these hyar woods an' deer 'll be gettin' sca'se."

"I shouldn't wonder," was the wife's reply.

"Now thar was three of 'em passed by in the fall, a-goin' to Deercreek; an' two mo', week fo' las', a-goin' to Deercreek; an' two this morn', a-goin' to Deercreek" —with a jerk of the head in the direction the Tregellases had taken. "An' that man was mighty keen about deer, *I* tell you. The other man—he with the satchel—he was keen about bugs, an' silkflies, an' snakes, an' sech foolishness. But this hyar stranger—'twas deer, deer, all the time. Red deer, too. Some o' they mean skunks up Jonesville way must ha' tol' him, I reckon. Ef they ain't the meanest lot! I told him about b'ars an' wil' cats an' 'coons; but, you bet, I didn't tell him about no deer. No, *sir!* Tol' him this was a mighty po' country for deer, anyway."

Mrs. Pringle gave a short laugh, if the sound could be called a laugh which had no vestige of mirth in it.

"Lucky I didn't fry a piece for that stranger woman. I mout, only I allowed thar warn't much of it left, an' the meat" (*i.e.* salt pork) "stood right thar, mo' handy."

Mat Pringle laughed silently, and continued:

"Yes, you bet, I told him 'twas a mighty po' place for deer; a mighty po' place for deer. An' so it will be, pretty soon, with a crowd huntin' over ground that

'll jes' keep one man beesy an' no mo'. So I tell you, Judy Jane, we'll hev to move out o' this, an' that 'll be befo' next fall, I reckon."

"Oh, Lor'!" his wife exclaimed, driven beyond her patience. "You'll hev to move me into my grave one o' these days, an' that will be my las' move. An' the sooner the better!"

"Shucks!" was Mat's reply to this outburst.

He had finished cleaning his gun, and had loaded it and was whistling for his dog, when his wife spoke again.

"Mat, cut me some wood befo' you go."

"I dunno as I kin stop for that. I've got petikler business yonder, an' I'm boun' to git over the mountains befo' the sun gits high."

"Then," said Mrs. Pringle in desperation, "me an' the childer will hev to do without victuals till you come back. Thar's on'y a stick of white oak out in the yard, an' split that I cannot, it hurts my back too much. You know my back ain't been wuth a cent this long while. If 'twas poplar I wouldn't say a word."

Muttering something uncomplimentary to his wife's back, Mat laid down his gun and seized the axe. Presently the ground round the white oak log was sprinkled far and wide with chips. "Will that do you?" he inquired, when he had split half-a-dozen pieces, each big enough for a Yule log.

"Depends on when you'll be back. How long will you be away?"

"Couldn't say. Mout be back to-night, an' yit I

mout not. You will hev to pick up sticks in the woods like every one else. I can't stay foolin' roun' cuttin' up wood for you all the time."

"Thar's so many snakes about, an' the childer's got no shoes, an' I'm mos' barefoot myself; it makes me skeery to go in them woods. Else I'd go, sooner'n ask you to cut wood for me. You bet I would! I don't s'pose you'd keer ef I did get bit by a moccasin," she added, with a sob of indignation in her voice.

"Shucks!" was Mat's rejoinder. Once more he whistled to his dog, and shouldered his gun, when his wife interrupted his exit with:—'If you was goin' anywhar near the sto', you might buy a coat for Polly. She's mighty bad off for coats."

"I got no money to spend on Polly," said Mat.

"No money! Shall you be goin' Deercreek way?"

"Dunno. I mout an' I moutn't." And with that Mat departed. Then his wife was sure that he was going to the whiskey shanty to spend the money the stranger had given him. She thought about this in a slow, dreamy way, and by dinner time she had concluded that if her husband wanted to move she would make no opposition. The money he was getting from chance guests was no good to her or to the children, and it was doing him harm. When he knew he had nothing to depend on except his gun, he would keep sober.

Two hours' ride brought Tregellas and Edith to a creek crossed by a trestle bridge belonging to the railway, one end of which was washed away. The water was low now, but muddy pools, bundles of driftwood

and trunks of trees in mid-channel, and the washed appearance of the ground for a hundred yards on either side, showed that in spite of its present insignificance it was capable of being a mischievous torrent. Near by stood a row of shanties for the accommodation of the labourers employed in repairing the bridge. Separate from these was a shanty with a glazed window, which served as a frame to a coarsely coloured print of a celebrated Missouri outlaw. On the door the word "Saloon" was painted in variously sized letters.

The door of the saloon stood open, and Mat Pringle was among the drinkers. He had reached Deercreek by a short cut across the hills; and he now rushed out and besought Tregellas, with a cordiality of manner and rapidity of speech strangely in contrast to the sulky taciturnity of his sober condition the evening before, to come in and take a dram.

Tregellas, while declining, spoke him fair; yet he would have had some difficulty in getting rid of him, had not Mat just then espied two horsemen approaching on a track which merged into the one they had been following, at some little distance from the creek.

Of the two horsemen one was tall, and, as he dismounted, Tregellas observed that he had a green tin case slung to his back, large enough to hamper his movements, which were further impeded by a fishing rod, a butterfly net, and a riding whip which he carried. He was long-necked and long-legged, and walked awkwardly in riding boots which seemed too large for him. His felt hat had a white muslin puggaree

twisted round it, and on this, as well as on the hat itself, were impaled as thickly as they could be placed, a quantity of butterflies and beetles. His companion was a man long past middle age, of substantial build, and mild aspect. He wore spectacles, and when he took off his hat his broad bald forehead was visible with wisps of grey streaked hair falling over it. In the cut of his clothes and his general appearance there was something clerical, yet this was belied by his white straw hat, which had a spotted cotton handkerchief fastened carelessly round it. As he reined in his horse he surveyed the prospect and the persons in the foreground with a benevolent smile, and said a word at which his companion smiled too.

Mat Pringle, who had hailed the newcomers before they stopped, rushed up to them, shaking hands right and left: then, coming back to where Tregellas was, said loudly :—

"Them's the fellers I was tellin' you of. That's the luny, that long man: and the chunky one is the menister what goes around with him all the time. What'll you take?"

Tregellas still declined; upon which Mat's friendliness turned to cursing. But Tregellas reminded him that he could not leave the lady, and slipped a dollar into his hand. Mat, pacified, disappeared into the saloon, whence his voice presently rose in a hilarious measure, with a chorus of hallelujahs from the rest of the company.

Telling Edith that it would be well for them to cross the stream before their whilom host could re-appear,

Tregellas was about to guide her horse through the water at the usual crossing place, when the clerical looking stranger rode up, and lifting his hat courteously, said that if they would follow him he could show them a safer crossing a hundred yards lower down. The volume of water during the late storm had washed the bed of the creek into holes, and that place would not be safe to cross at until another storm of equal violence should have brought down soil to fill the holes made by the former one.

They were soon joined by the other horseman, and rode down the margin of the stream in Indian file, crossing it at a place where the banks were lower, and the water had had more room to spread.

Tregellas found on inquiry that this water was Deercreek. The clerical man inquired in his turn, with a courtesy which deprived the question of offensiveness, whether the travellers were on their way to the Deercreek settlement. Tregellas replied that they were. They had heard a good deal about Deercreek, and as he and his wife intended to settle in America, they thought it as well to have a look at that place among others.

The stranger had taken off his hat and bowed, as Tregellas alluded to his wife. His manner—notwithstanding his hat—betokened an acquaintance with the usages of society; and his speech was that of an educated man; yet, as Edith thought, with an almost imperceptible tincture—more in the pitch of the voice than in pronunciation—of the west country.

"I took it for granted you must be going to

Deercreek, because the road leads nowhere else. But I ought not to call it Deercreek. At a meeting of the citizens, three weeks ago, the name was changed to Harmonia. One benighted creature, wanted it to be called 'Junction,' and I believe there were two votes for 'Central,' but the majority went for 'Harmonia,' and Harmonia it is. I am vexed with myself that I cannot get out of the habit of calling it Deercreek. But, now that we are on the road, and can ride abreast, instead of keeping Indian file, let me introduce myself, and my friend. My name is Denning, a private person of small means; and this is my friend Garlick, who is, after the Major and Colonel, the great prop of the settlement."

"Not much of a prop," said the other, with careless good humour. "No man deserves that name who may pull up stakes, and be off to-morrow if the fancy takes him. I tell my friend Denning, that if he wants to cure himself of the habit of calling the place Deercreek, he should set up a newspaper, and bring it out as the *Harmonia Pioneer*, or some such name."

"So I would, if I had the money, and the patience," said Mr. Denning. "But, 'lives there the man with soul so dead,' as to stay indoors writing a leading article, instead of riding about the country on such a day as this, for instance? If I were obliged to do it for bread, I should do it, no doubt. But, till then, I prefer riding here and there, whenever the whim takes me. We were coming back from a voyage of discovery," he said, addressing Edith. "We had heard of a certain

waterfall, and we have found it, and it is far finer than we were led to suppose. But it has a drawback ; no lady can possibly get to it till a road has been made. The density of the vegetation is beyond belief, this not being a tropical climate. So we are going to try to persuade some of our idle young men up there, to take hold of the axe, and hew out a road, and make the waterfall one of the attractions of Harmonia."

"I think, after all," said Edith, "I prefer the name of Deercreek, it sounds pretty and sylvan."

Mr. Denning laughed. "Some of our citizens don't want to be sylvan. They want the place to be a city ; a rural city."

Tregellas asked, if that was what in England was called a country town; and Mr. Garlick laughed, and asked his friend what he had to say to that.

"Laugh as much as you like," was the answer. "There are infinite possibilities in Harmonia. I like to view them in my mind's eye. I like to think, such an one will find here, what he might find nowhere else ; a place to stand on, a spot in which to take root and grow. Such another will come here, transplanted, lopped, bleeding, and find a kindly shelter in which to sprout again. Yes"—he fell into a musing tone—"there are infinite possibilities in Harmonia. I always feel that, even when I feel, as I do now and then, that I am almost too old to be transplanted anywhere."

After about an hour's slow progress on a road which was alike in all respects to their route of the day before, except that it was wider, and showed frequent-

traces of waggon wheels, the Tregellases, guided by their new acquaintance, emerged on a broad, well made, level road, which stretched in a straight line as far as they could see. Edith exclaimed in delight.

"Let us canter, Harry. I am so tired of crawling along." But the canter was a short one; their beasts could not be kept to it after a lifetime of alternate crawl and jog-trot. The horses of the other two were fresher, and were sounder specimens of horse flesh, but Mr. Denning reined up as soon as he saw that the travellers had resumed their jog-trot, and Mr. Garlick had stopped, almost at the beginning of the canter, and was now in a clearing by the road side, chasing a butterfly. It was not till they had ridden a mile further on, that he came up with them, red in the face, panting, but with a smile of satisfaction at having captured his butterfly.

Just here they come upon a well-fenced clearing, several acres in extent, which Mr. Denning told Tregellas was the cricket ground. He and Mr. Garlick both dismounted and surveyed the plot with much interest, leaning their arms on the fence with an evident sense of proprietorship; as well they might, seeing that they had contributed to pay for the fence and the grass seed which had been sown on the plot.

Mr. Denning appeared much pleased. "We are getting on," he said; "we are getting on. That grass will be fine." He walked backwards a little into the road and stooped, so as to get a sideways view of the ground; then he straightened himself and put his two

hands over his eyes as a sunshade, and kept on repeating, "We shall have a stand; I think we shall have a stand. And what a glorious cricket ground it will be!"

Edith, seeing what appeared to be grass of some sort sprouting thickly in some spots, and thinly in others; and again in certain spots quite obliterated by the stout growth of young shoots from roots which had retained their vitality after losing their tops, began to think that if either of the two men were lunatic, it was the one whom Mat Pringle had called the keeper.

Mr. Garlick, who had surveyed the embryo cricket ground with judicial impartiality, now pronounced judgment. "It might have done better had it been rolled."

"I don't see that at all," said Mr. Denning quickly.

"I rolled a bit that I laid down in front of my door," Mr. Garlick insisted, "and it looks twice as well as this."

"But you forget that you kept two darkies watering that square in front of your door all the time the drought lasted."

"Drought!" Tregellas exclaimed. "I did not know this region was ever visited by drought."

"Oh," said Mr. Denning lightly, "it was not so much of a drought. It only lasted five weeks."

"Five weeks! I call that a good deal of a drought."

"It did very little damage, I assure you. It did not

hurt my vines in the least. I should like to show you my vineyard."

"A vineyard!" said Edith. "That sounds delightful."

"And it will be delightful in two or three years' time."

"This must be a strange sort of country, though," said Tregellas, "if you call a drought which lasts five weeks not much of a drought."

"It is a strange country—a very strange country," said Mr. Denning with slow impressiveness. "The longer I stay, the more I see it. Its vitality, its power of recuperation, seem to me extraordinary. A drought of three weeks in England would do far more damage, under a sun whose beams have 50 per cent. less power. I remember, one year, when we did have a drought for about three weeks, my churchwarden, who was the principal farmer in my parish, entreated me to use the Prayer for Rain, and I did so. And when we came out of church, one gruff old man asked me why I had not put up the prayer on the previous Sunday. It was too late to do him any good, he said."

"May I ask if you are the vicar, or rector, of Harmonia?" Tregellas ventured to say. "I thought you were a clergyman."

"*Il tino da di quel che sa*," said the other lightly, with a correct but slightly pedantic accent. "I am a clergyman, but I am not *the* clergyman. My friend Garlick wished me to apply for the cure when the vestry was constituted, but—I have not done duty for so many years that—in short, the rector of a place like this

ought to be a young and active man, not one like me, a confirmed wanderer. I am trying to cure myself of the habit, but I don't know whether I shall. I have been here a year. And I may start off to-morrow."

"I am a lieutenant in the navy," said Tregellas. "Or, to speak correctly, I was. I retired the other day; and, so far from wishing to wander any more, I am seeking for a good anchorage." His eyes sought Edith, who was riding a little in advance. Mr. Denning looked that way too, and smiled gravely.

"I do not wonder that you should seek an anchorage. If I had such an inducement!—but I have been a lonely man for very many years. I wish we had a dozen like you, to build up Harmonia. It is the class from which you spring that is the backbone and sinew of England: that would be the backbone and sinew of any country. If every boy of every degree could be sent into the navy for a term of years, it would be the salvation of our youth. Whenever I have said so, I have been ridiculed. But our public schools are becoming luxurious, enervating in their influence. However I will not begin on that, for I shall never stop. Only this I know: that a young fellow must endure hardness if you want to make a man of him. And he must endure it in his own proper person, and not by deputy. And where can that be insured except on board ship? I would have a term of service afloat compulsory, as service in the German army is compulsory. But I am beginning to preach, though I said I would not." He reined in and fell behind for a while, and Tregellas rode on, thinking that for a clergyman this was a wonderfully wise man.

Riding onward, they passed successively a lawn-tennis court, a croquet ground, a park set out with rustic benches, and a young plantation of some kind of low, green bush. This was neatly fenced in, and in front of a tent which was pitched close to a clump of trees a little way from the road, the owner of the plantation stood and waved his hand in salutation when he saw Mr. Denning.

"That is the Colonel," said Mr. Denning to Tregellas. "He is simply the best fellow in the world; and we have plenty of good fellows here. But he is *the* best. Let me introduce you."

The Colonel lifted his hat and showed a bald forehead and grey hair. He had a gentle smile and a low voice, as he expressed a hope that the newcomers would like Harmonia.

Mr. Denning, in answer to Edith's question, told her that the rows of green bushes were tea plants. That was the Colonel's tea plantation. The Major was very sanguine about it, and said the Colonel would have made his fortune in less than five years. Edith, who began to feel interested on hearing this, asked how long before a crop might be expected.

"I believe the Colonel expects a crop in three years."

"Three years! What a long time to wait!"

"A few to-days, a few to-morrows," said Mr. Denning.

"But the to-days and the to-morrows help to make up eternity."

"Ah, you young people are so impatient," said Mr. Denning, with a benevolent smile.

But now the street of Harmonia was seen in the distance, and presently the hotel could be distinguished, a big structure, overtopping all the rest by a couple of stories. It was painted brown, and there was a balcony on the first story, tenanted by several ladies, who were seated mostly in rocking-chairs and fanning themselves. Some had parasols as well as fans, and one lady sat apart half hidden by a big umbrella.

"All waiting for the sound of the dinner-bell," said Mr. Denning, as he dismounted.

A pleasant-looking, bustling young man stood just within the doorway, and shook hands warmly with our travellers as they entered. Mr. Denning and Mr. Garlick, who appeared to be *habitués*—they took their meals there—passed the young man with a nod, and he gave them the information over his shoulder as he preceded Tregellas to the office, that the strike was over. Asking what strike, Tregellas was told that it was not much of a strike—only a coloured washer-women's strike. The strikers had come to terms just in time; in another week the Boss would have "fixed" to run the laundry by steam. The office was a luggage-room and smoking-room combined, and there was a row of chairs with spittoons at intervals on one side, while the other was filled up by a counter, on which lay large books looking like day-ledgers, a rack for letters, and a table which held an ice-water fountain, painted gaily to imitate a Chinese pagoda, with a brass faucet and a cocoanut dipper attached by a chain. Behind the

counter stood another young man, much bejewelled, alert, and smiling, who shook hands with Tregellas and his wife as if they were long-lost friends, and pushed one of the big books across the counter with a pen already dipped in ink. He glanced quickly at what was written, and took it for granted Mr. and Mrs. Tregellas would not wish to go higher than the first story. Edith wanted to say to her husband that they ought to go up to the highest story the house contained, but her courage failed her, and they were shown into one of the best front rooms.

On the corridor belonging to the first floor was a row of strong trunks, all bearing marks of hard usage, and all marked in large, white letters, "Mrs. Colonel Haverstock." Edith wondered as she passed by what manner of woman she could be who would have her luggage thus labelled at this end of this nineteenth century. The black waiter brought up the saddle-bags and departed, informing her that dinner would be ready before so very long. Edith unfolded her dress, but found it so hopelessly tumbled that she decided to send it to the laundry and dine in her room. She rang to make her wishes known to the chambermaid; but the chambermaid being engaged in a flirtation with a couple of waiters a shade darker than herself, the bell remained unanswered. Edith, after ringing in vain, sat down on the sofa to wait, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

EDITH was sound asleep when the negro chambermaid opened the door noisily without knocking, and called out:

"Hyar's comp'ny fer you."

Edith woke with a start, and the chambermaid went on, with a grin which showed all her teeth, "Mis' Cunnel, want to say howdy. Shall I tell her to come right in?"

Without waiting for an answer, she retired as abruptly as she had entered, and Edith heard the following colloquy through the half-opened door.

"Did you give the lady my card?" The voice that uttered the question was undoubtedly English. The negro voice replied:

"No, ma'am. Here 'tis. She doan' want no kyard."

"Take in my card immediately!"

"She ain't got no use fur no kyard. She's woke up good now, and you kin go right in."

"Dear, dear! What tiresome, stupid, benighted creatures they are!"

"Thar she!" exclaimed the chambermaid, as she threw the door wide open.

The owner of the voice appeared; a tall, thin woman dressed in some flimsy black material which seemed to accentuate the angularity of her figure. Her nose was long and thin, and her forehead narrow. Her iron-grey hair was dressed in smooth bands in the fashion of a past generation; her hands were large and bony, and encased in black mittens; in her right she held the visiting card which the negress had returned to her; in her left she carried a roll of paper and a black fan.

"It is—ah—so very awkward," she began. "I sent in a message and my card, but you received neither. Therefore you must excuse my presenting myself."

As she held the card out Edith took it, and saw written thereon in a bold, masculine hand, the words, "Mrs. Colonel Haverstock." This, then, was the owner of the row of trunks in the corridor. At that moment Edith became conscious that it must be considerably past dinner-time, and that she had not dined. She excused herself for being in her dressing-gown and asked Mrs. Haverstock to be seated. Mrs. Haverstock declined the sofa with a negative shake of the head, and selected the most uncomfortable chair in the room. She placed herself in front of Edith, who had let herself sink back on the sofa, and began:

"Being the oldest lady boarder here, and taking precedence because of my husband's rank, I feel it my duty to call on the new arrivals."

While Edith was making suitable acknowledgments there was a knock at the door. On opening it two

young ladies appeared, dressed alike in white. One was tall and thin, with a look that might proceed either from ill-health or discontent, or both. The other was short and plump, with bright black eyes and cheeks that still held their roses in spite of the semi-tropical temperature.

"There is mamma!" exclaimed the younger lady. "Mamma has stolen a march on us." She looked at Edith with a smile full of good humour, and then at Mrs. Haverstock.

"As you are here, mamma, perhaps you will introduce us."

"My two daughters, Mrs. Tregellas," said Mrs. Haverstock, shortly. Then, addressing herself to the elder:

"This is inconsiderate, Florence. You might have remembered that Mrs. Tregellas cannot possibly have recovered from the fatigue of her journey."

The elder opened her mouth to speak but was interrupted by the younger.

"It was I who made Florence come. Mr. Denning was telling the people at his table at dinner about your ride through the wilderness," she continued, turning to Edith, "and everybody is dying to make your acquaintance. We all think it so romantic."

"I never thought it romantic," said Edith, "but it was very pleasant."

"And so plucky! I adore people who do plucky things."

"It did not strike me that it was plucky," said Edith. "The plucky thing would have been my

remaining at that place where the train broke down, and being eaten up by mosquitoes."

Miss Haverstock acknowledged that there was some truth in that. She proceeded to make inquiries, which were more minute than well-bred, as to Edith's plans and prospects, and was sharply interrupted by her mother.

"Kate, you allow your tongue too great licence. Be silent."

"I am dumb," said the girl, smiling archly at Edith.

"We were interested," said Mrs. Haverstock, with a blandness of manner which contrasted strangely with her sharpness of an instant before, "at hearing under what circumstances you had come to this country."

"Very kind of you," Edith murmured, feeling slightly disconcerted.

"You are quite a bride, we were told," said Mrs. Haverstock, in a tone of voice which might have been appropriate had she heard that Edith was an habitual sufferer from neuralgia.

Edith wondered what was coming next. "Rather an old bride by this time," she said, blushing in spite of herself.

"Well, my dear young friend," said Mrs. Haverstock, "and so you have all the world before you where to choose."

"With a difference," said Edith. "When our first parents had that choice, they had been thrust out of Paradise. But I—I do not think I shall ever be thrust out of Paradise."

She blushed as she spoke the last words, and looked

with a shy and tender appeal in her eyes at the middle-aged woman before her. But Mrs. Haverstock sat bolt upright on her hard chair and raised her black fan in warning.

"Beware," she said in her deepest tones. "Beware, lest the enemy of souls be laying a deep snare for you."

Edith replied with a shade of hauteur that she did not think anything of the kind was likely to happen.

Mrs. Haverstock shut her eyes and wagged her head slowly.

"My dear young friend, I fear that you are leaning on an arm of flesh."

"I am," said Edith with spirit. "And I should be a very wicked woman were I not thankful to have it to lean upon."

The youngest Miss Haverstock glanced from Edith to her mother with eyes that twinkled with amusement. Mrs. Haverstock's eyes were still closed, but her head wagged gently, and her lips moved as though she were muttering an incantation.

"Bravo, Mrs. Tregellas," exclaimed the younger Miss Haverstock. "I do like a woman to stick up for her husband."

Mrs. Haverstock opened her eyes and said, "Be silent, Kate." The elder Miss Haverstock blushed up to her forehead and looked annoyed at her sister's lack of breeding.

"I won't stay a minute longer to be sat upon," the girl cried, jumping up. "I'll say good-bye for the present, Mrs. Tregellas. We shall see plenty of each other, no doubt, before we get out of this stupid hotel

and into our own diggings. Come, Florence, are you asleep?"

The elder sister rose to say good-bye. She looked nervous and undecided; her lips trembled, she held Edith's hand a moment longer than was necessary. Edith wondered at her want of manner, as she had wondered at the bad manner of the other; but she supposed that all the family shyness had fallen to this young lady's share.

"Good-bye, Miss Haverstock," she said. "Thank you for coming to see me."

"I—I am not Miss Haverstock," said the girl, blushing and stammering. "I—I am—my name is Bontecoe. Mrs. Bontecoe."

Edith begged pardon. She had not heard the name.

"Mamma did not introduce us properly," said the younger sister. "She put us together all in a lump. That is what she is always doing."

Mrs. Haverstock showed no sign of bringing her visit to a close. She opened her eyes when her daughters were gone and remarked that their visit had been inopportune. Edith, to whom the question of dinner was momentarily becoming more interesting, endeavoured to say something about the Colonel's tea plantation which she had seen on the road. Mrs. Haverstock, in tones of asperity, declared that she never had felt, and never should feel, the smallest interest in the tea plantation. She had followed her husband from a sense of duty. She had dragged herself and her children into the wilderness, and perhaps one day the Colonel would say they must drag them-

selves back again. Meanwhile her sphere of usefulness was closed.

Feeling at a loss what to say, Edith remarked weakly that the country was pretty.

"I am told that it is," was her visitor's reply. "For myself, its outward aspect is a matter of indifference to me. I am a woman with a mission. When I come to a new place, my first question is: Shall I find here a sphere of usefulness? Shall I be furthered, or shall I be hindered, in the accomplishment of my mission?"

Edith suggested that the accomplishment of a woman's mission was as easy at Harmonia as anywhere else; but Mrs. Haverstock explained that hers was a peculiar mission; that its accomplishment involved something far higher and nobler than the common duties and common tasks which fell to the lot of ordinary wives and mothers.

"My lot in life should have been that of a missionary's wife," she said with a frown. "My marriage with the Colonel was a mistake which I expiate daily. Not that I ask for pity," she added. "I ask for none. I wish for none."

Edith silently thought the Colonel was to be the more pitied of the two. She began to suspect that her visitor was mad, and wished that her husband would come in.

Mrs. Haverstock at length rose, and handed Edith the roll of paper she held in her hand.

"This," she said, "is a magazine in which I am much interested. It is a valuable work, though not appreciated as it deserves. I trust you may appreciate

it sufficiently to become a subscriber; terms, six shillings a year paid in advance. I have marked two articles in it which are from my own pen. Will you, my dear young friend, promise me to read them carefully, prayerfully?" She took Edith's hand and pressed it as she spoke; and Edith, hoping to get rid of her, promised.

"And—" Mrs. Haverstock continued, still holding her hand and gazing intently into her face—"You will strive not to lean on an arm of flesh?"

Edith said, gently, that perhaps they had better not discuss that point.

Mrs. Haverstock lifted up her hand and shook it. "'As a bowing wall shall he be to thee,'" she cried, "'and as a tottering fence.' Read my two articles. They may bring you a blessing if perused in a right spirit. And I trust—I trust that I may have the pleasure of putting down your name as a subscriber to the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah*."

As she left the room Tregellas appeared, followed by a waiter with a tray. He had been up stairs once to see if his wife was ready for dinner, and, finding her sound asleep, had left strict orders that she was not to be disturbed. He had yet to learn that no negro can understand why a visitor should be denied entrance for any reason whatever. While his wife ate her dinner (which being beyond the dinner hour had only been procured by a special bribe to the head waiter) Harry glanced at the magazine which Mrs. Haverstock had left her to read.

One of the papers marked for Edith's special reading

consisted of a hundred lines of doggerel verse addressed to the Red Indians, who, in the opinion of the writer, were the descendants of the Lost Tribes. The other was in the form of a letter to the editor, and appeared to be an answer to a paper in a former issue, in which the writer had endeavoured to prove that the Lost Tribes were the progenitors of the Saxons who invaded England. Quotation marks and italics were plentiful, and the contempt of the writer for her opponent's opinions was as pronounced as is usual in such controversies. Both papers were signed "C. Haverstock."

Edith was relieved to find from her husband that Mrs. Haverstock was not considered mad; or at least, only mad on the subject of the Lost Tribes. It was her habit to call on newcomers and ask them to subscribe to her magazine. If they failed to take a subscription, she thenceforth treated them with cold contempt. Edith resolved that she would endeavour to be so treated. Harry, who had been already introduced to more than half the citizens of Harmonia in the smoking-room of the hotel, had observed that the Colonel was universally spoken of in tones of kindliness; even of pity, as a man who had a great deal to put up with. On laying down the magazine he remarked to his wife that he hoped she would never have a mission.

"That woman is a wicked woman," said Edith.

Tregellas laughed. "Only a woman with a fad, I think. She may be good, in a disagreeable, uncomfortable way. You must not be intolerant, dear. You know this is a free country."

"A free country!" Edith repeated. "And she had the impertinence to tell me that I was not to trust you!"

"That might have been good advice under other circumstances."

"I cannot make a joke about it!" cried Edith. "Do you know this, Harry? If the day ever comes that I cannot trust you, I shall die."

Tregellas looked grave. Their eyes and their lips met, and he said, with his arm closely twined round her, "I don't pretend to be a saint, or an angel, or a hero, and that you know, dear; but I believe I have sense enough to get along and keep straight. And I do not think I am likely to betray any trust you may put in me."

When the short twilight was over, and the breeze from the distant mountains had imparted a grateful coolness to the heat-laden atmosphere, Edith and her husband went for a stroll together; their last honeymoon stroll, as she said with a little sigh.

For the busy world with its cares and its interests had them in its grasp once more. On the morrow Tregellas had appointments which would take up all his time. He must see the land agent, he must see various people who had settled in the neighbourhood, and who wished to let him profit by their experience. It was remarkable that each one of these persons had separately warned him against placing confidence in the assertions of any other settler; and that all had warned him against believing a word that he might be told by any agent, builder, contractor, or person in or out of authority.

"We must go at half-speed, and take soundings as

we go," said Tregellas, as he stood with his wife where the street of Harmonia became lost in the uncleared woodland.

"The country is pretty—more than pretty. I have not heard of any swamps to give us ague, and if it is wild, it is no more than we ought to expect. And as for the people!—one meets good and bad everywhere; and we must bear in mind that America is the paradise for people with a fad. Look at the Dunkers, and the Shakers, and all those strange sects. It is a big country, and there is room for everybody. It will be hard if we cannot find standing room too, eh, my darling? Unless you take a dislike to this place I vote we try it."

Edith's answer was in the words of Ruth.

"Well," said Tregellas, "we will weigh the *pros* and *cons*, and mind what we are about. For if there is one thing I hate, it is what we call 'backing and filling.'"

Edith thought that never man had spoken such words of wisdom as were spoken by her husband. And now, having brought them so far on their way, let us go back a little and explain how Harry Tregellas and Edith de Glanvile came to marry and go to America.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AUNTS.

It was a great blow to the Misses de Glanvile when their niece Edith told them that she was going to marry young Mr. Tregellas. She was the only child of their only brother, John de Glanvile, and they had hoped better things of her. For the last two generations, the ancient stock to which they belonged had suffered an almost total eclipse. Their grandfather had half-ruined himself by electioneering. Their father had completed the ruin by speculation. Their brother John had lived and died a poverty-stricken man—poor in health, poor in purse, and poor in spirit, as Miss Rachel, the elder sister would say, when she was adding up the sum of his deficiencies. All her life Miss Rachel had felt that Providence had made a mistake in creating her a daughter of the de Glanviles, instead of a son. Her brother John had shown his poverty of spirit in more ways than one. He had married for love instead of money; he had disliked the climate of England, and had preferred a wretched English chaplaincy on the shores of the Mediterranean, to a rectory on the banks

of the Tamar, which might possibly have been a stepping-stone to something better. On the shores of the Mediterranean he had lived in contented poverty, and then he had died of consumption—his last and crowning offence in the eyes of Miss Rachel, for she could not remember a de Glanville having died of that disease. It had been the habit of the de Glanviles to die of repletion rather than exhaustion. Miss Rachel and her sister had known evil days, and had borne the pinch of poverty as well as their brother, though without his contentment. But by the time Edith came to live with them, after her parents' death, the cloud seemed as if it were about to show its silver lining once more to the remaining de Glanviles. After going for many a year on foot, these ladies were able to set up their carriage. Instead of their humble maid of all work, they had their upper and under servants, their head gardener and under gardener, as in the time dear to Miss Rachel's memory—her father's time before the crash came. This wonderful turn in the wheel of fortune was in great measure owing to Devon Great Consols and Huel Friendship, shares in which had been bequeathed the sisters by a distant relative. They took their prosperity with the proud reserve which became gentlewomen of such high descent. They had excellent constitutions, and intended to live long and enjoy themselves. They only acknowledged that they were mortal to this extent, that they would admit to each other, in rare moments of confidence, that Edith must at some distant day come into the enjoyment of their joint possessions. Edith would of course marry. Miss

Rachel always took that for granted. She should be introduced in a proper manner, presented at Court, as became a de Glanvile; and in due time a fitting husband would be found for her. There should be no mistake as to his fitness, Miss Rachel would say. And there was many a younger son of good stock who would think it no shame to take the ancient name of de Glanvile. But insensibly this last detail was suffered to drop from Miss Rachel's scheme, because, though she fully intended to give all her money to Edith after she was dead, she could not bring herself to proclaim her openly as her heiress. She desired that Edith, as well as all future suitors, should feel that she could do what she would with her own; were it to build alms-houses, or to enrich the British Museum, or to found a de Glanvile scholarship, if it should so please her. Miss Elizabeth would have liked to declare her niece her heiress, but she would have been afraid to oppose her sister; nor was she to be called a rich woman, though she had an income more than sufficient for her wants. Her mining shares had been less in number and less productive than those which filled her sister's money bags. But she was generous to her niece when Miss Rachel was only just. She thought a great deal about the fitting husband whom Miss Rachel's wisdom would select; but while Miss Rachel thought of the family, Miss Elizabeth thought of the affections. She had had her own little romance, which had ended badly. She had got over it, as people say, and was to all appearance a happy, prosperous woman; but she had learned from her affair of the heart that only love can

give a woman true content, and she hoped silently that her niece would meet with such a love when the right time came. Under such auspices Edith grew up, and began to look back on her own childhood as a far away epoch of existence. Yet the two aunts, Miss Rachel and Miss Elizabeth, still continued their dreamy deliberations as to their niece's future, as though each quick revolving year had twenty-four months in it. There is no saying how long they might have gone on dreaming of what should be done to make sure of their niece's falling in love with the right person, had not Edith startled them beyond measure by falling in love with young Tregellas, whom she had danced with at a ball on board H.M.S. *Centaur*, of which he was third lieutenant.

It goes without saying that this young man was not at all the kind of person that Miss Rachel would have selected as a husband for her niece. The first objection to him was the want of family. The first de Glanvile was a noted man, *temp.* Henry II.; whereas the first that was known of a Tregellas was that a Cornishman of that name was one of the company of gentleman adventurers who, sailing under the orders of that doughty Tavistock man, Sir Francis Drake, burnt a million tons, or thereabouts, of Spanish shipping from Cadiz to Corunna. From Henry II. to Elizabeth is a long stretch, though, to be sure, Miss Rachel knew of many families which only began to be heard of in Elizabeth's time, and have since then attained to great honour and eminence. But the Tregellas family had not attained to much of either, and

there was nothing to break the force of either of Miss Rachel's objections. Harry Tregellas was merely the younger son of a younger son. He was without even a younger son's portion, and he had no prospects in his profession, or out of it. Consequently he was an impossible husband for Edith, and Miss Rachel wrote courteously to tell him so.

"Say it as kindly as you can, Rachel," said Miss Elizabeth, whose kind heart was on the lover's side. "One would not wish to hurt the poor young man's feelings more than one could help. I dare say he is very much in love with the dear child. She grows prettier every day, and he must be well aware that she has nothing of her own."

"If you mean to ask me not to speak with decision," Miss Rachel returned, "I must tell you that you are quite wrong. In this case a peremptory refusal will be the truest kindness to both of them. I am not going to have any more pauper marriages in this family. I will neither support one Tregellas nor a dozen."

"But, after all, supposing Edith were a daughter, there would be nothing strange in making her an allowance. It might come from us both. I would do a great deal to make the child happy," Miss Elizabeth ventured to say.

"Under other circumstances," said Miss Rachel slowly, "I might be inclined to do something of the kind. As it is, I will not. You, of course, will do as you please with your own money. For myself, sooner would I that Edith lived unmarried as you and I have done, than see her the wife of such a nobody as this Tregellas. But

there is no need why she should live unmarried. We will take her about and let her see the world. Perhaps we should have done so before; but at all events we will begin now. We will let her see for herself that there are other young men besides Harry Tregellas, and handsomer ones too. Though I acknowledge that there is not much amiss with the young man's looks, were other things more suitable."

So Edith was sent for to Miss Rachel's private parlour whence she issued her daily commands to her household; and there the girl went with her cheeks red and her heart beating, and a flicker of hope which rose up when she saw her Aunt Elizabeth seated by the window, and died out quickly as she saw that the kindly lady did not look at her, but leaned her head on her hand and looked pensively into the garden. Edith had expected such a summons, because Tregellas had told her that he should write to her Aunt Rachel without delay.

Now Edith, knowing something of her Aunt Rachel's views on matrimony, had braced herself up for the occasion. She expected to be told that she was foolish, that she might do a great deal better, that the engagement would be a very long one, and so forth. But instead of a grudging consent Aunt Rachel told her in a calm, deliberative, judicial manner, as though the mantle of Chief Justice Ranulf de Glanvile had descended on her, that a marriage with a poor lieutenant in the navy without prospects of any sort was utterly impossible. Aunt Rachel's words had been carefully chosen so as to admit of no rejoinder. In kindness to her niece she felt that it was best so.

There was a pause after she had spoken. Aunt Elizabeth ventured to look at Edith, as a bystander looks at a victim in the dentist's chair. She gave a little gasp of sympathy. Was the pain so very bad? How would the dear child bear it?

"I will never marry any other man," Edith cried, in tones of decision equal to her Aunt Rachel's. Then she turned and fled. They heard her fleet foot up the old oak stairs and along the wainscoted corridor, and then the hasty shutting of a door.

Aunt Elizabeth's lips trembled a little. She looked sadly into the garden and stifled a sigh. Aunt Rachel gave a little ladylike shudder at the vulgarity of her niece, and wondered where she had learnt such underbred, noisy ways. She supposed it was from her having lived abroad so much and having mixed with all sorts of people.

"It is but natural she should feel it a good deal at first," said Aunt Elizabeth in a tone of apology.

"My dear Elizabeth, she is a mere child. Depend upon it, she will have forgotten all about this—this absurd little love affair—in less than a month," said Aunt Rachel.

"Perhaps. Let us hope she will forget," said Aunt Elizabeth.

"Of course she will," said Aunt Rachel.

Aunt Elizabeth made no further answer. She looked once more into the garden and observed that the sun was shining and she would take a turn, and perhaps Rachel would come presently. Miss Rachel declined, saying she had letters to write, so Miss Elizabeth went alone, as she most often did. She put on her hat and

veil and gloves, and took her parasol lest the sun should tan her well-preserved complexion, and went to that part of the shrubbery farthest from the house, and there walked up and down and thought of her own wasted youth, and wept a little for it: and then wept in pity for Edith, lest her youth should be wasted too. For their cases were very similar.

She had been Edith's age when she fell in love with a poor lieutenant in the navy, a younger son's son. They had neither fortune nor prospects between them, and had been ordered to forget each other by prudent parents on each side. She, having been brought up in habits of strict obedience, submitted herself to parental authority, in so far as to promise not to marry the man to whom they objected. She, only dared to reserve to herself the tacit right not to marry any other. And then ruin had come—the crash as her sister called it—and the rest of her young days was passed in obscurity, with unconfessed yearnings for the love of her girlhood, and perhaps an occasional glimmer of hope that things might come right, somehow, some day. But they never did.

"It was all for the best, no doubt," said Miss Elizabeth to herself as she wiped her eyes.

Many years afterward, when fortune's wheel had turned, and Miss Elizabeth was a well-to-do, comely, middle-aged woman, she saw that poor lieutenant once more.

She was paying a visit at some distance from her home, in a part of Devonshire with which she was not acquainted. For, as soon as the Misses de Glanvile

were able to set up their carriage, it is astonishing how many people of the sort called "carriage people" came forward to claim acquaintance with them on the score of having been acquainted with their father and grandfather. She was being driven by these new friends, in a carriage as comfortable as her own, with everything handsome about her, and not a care in the world beyond the fear of a change of weather which might obscure the view she wished to see, when all at once, as it had been a ghost, she saw her old lover, who had vowed love and loyalty to her when she was a girl; and who had obeyed his father's orders and forgotten her.

He was gaunt and stiff, and weather-beaten. His coat was off, and he was digging potatoes in a square patch of about a quarter of an acre, with a tiny cottage in one corner of it. A big boy with his jacket off, was wheeling the potatoes away as fast as they were dug; a big girl with sleeves tucked up and a pair of red arms, was spreading little frocks to dry on a row of gooseberry bushes. Miss Elizabeth saw that a slight salutation passed between her friend's husband and the potato digger, and asked falteringly, who was that man?

A very respectable man, said the friend's husband. A poor lieutenant, retired, living on his half-pay. Was said to have married for love, with the usual consequences. Crowd of children, packed like herrings in a barrel; wife a vixen and a drudge. One could not but feel sorry for the poor devil, who was a gentlemanly fellow to talk to, and had apparently seen something of good society in former days. Would ask

him to dinner now and then, the friend's husband declared, were he not afraid that the butler might give warning if he had to hand soup to such a shabby figure as the poor old fellow cut in his best coat. Pity—wasn't it?—to see a man brought so low.

Aunt Elizabeth murmured assent, and dropped her veil. She tried to talk, and pretended to admire all the beauties of the view as each one was pointed out to her. What did it matter to any one if her heart had received one final stab? It was not so much that her old lover should have married, as that he should have married unhappily. "I might have been a drudge," she said to herself, "but I never could have been a vixen. And oh! if he could but have been patient, we might have been happy together at last with my money."

She never told her sister a word; but when she reached home she sent fifty pounds to that poor old love of hers; managing so that he should not know it came from her. Every year after that, she sent him a like sum; but she would never visit that neighbourhood again, and she never thought of the scene without repugnance. Perhaps there is no feature in a landscape so mean looking, so unkempt, so squalid, as a potato garden with the plants dead and the rows half dug.

And now, as Miss Elizabeth walked up and down in the shrubbery, she thought with sadness, that it was her niece's turn; and she wept to think how Edith's heart must be aching. "Only a child, and she will soon forget it;" her own mother had said, when Elizabeth was a girl. She would be an old woman in

a few years, and she had not begun to forget. Would Edith forget?

Meanwhile Edith lay sobbing with her face on her pillow. She had not supposed that her aunts' consent would be given at once; she had expected hesitation, even a degree of opposition. But again, she had not supposed that she would be married immediately, nor had she wished it. What girl does wish to be hurried into marriage? In the first dawn of a happy love, the lover is too delightful a possession to be exchanged for the husband who may turn out such a very different kind of person. Even making love, which is the man's business, and a very delightful one, say those who have tried it, can hardly give such rapture as the being made love to; so a girl thinks. And they were both so young yet! A long engagement had no terrors for Edith; she took it for granted that her lover would be patient. Of course, they would be married some day; it did not matter when, as long as it was before she got old and ugly.

Edith might have wept all the afternoon at this sudden overthrow to her hopes, had she not remembered that it was getting near post time. She rose from her bed and looked at her watch, and saw that there was barely time for her to save that day's post.

There was no time to pick and choose her words. She seized her pen, and wrote:

"Aunt Rachel says we must give each other up. Are you going to give me up?—Edith."

That was all. She made up the letter in haste, and ran through the grounds and down the road, to intercept

the postman and give him a shilling, telling him to take particular care of that letter.

When Miss Elizabeth caught sight of Edith, apparently returning from a walk, with a bright colour on her cheek and a smile on her lips, she wondered not a little. She had supposed her niece to be up stairs weeping in her room, and she was thinking that she would steal up unknown to her sister, and offer her sympathy. Miss Elizabeth began to remember that in her time, young people did not get over a disappointment with such rapidity.

But Miss Elizabeth was destined to get a little light on the ways of a younger generation, before long.

Harry Tregellas passed a very bad quarter of an hour after receiving Miss Rachel's letter. It was all the worse for him in that he had to attend to his duties, and had not time to write a letter, much less the hope of getting leave to go ashore and see Edith. The first lieutenant was on shore, and the second was on the sick list. Tregellas could not even retire to his cabin to curse his ill luck. So he went about, and did his duty in a silent, thorough, sulky fashion; feeling as if the end of the world had come, and he did not care what happened next. His chum thought he had the toothache.

But his misery was short. The next day's post brought him Edith's little letter, and all the world looked bright again, though it was raining as it only can rain in the west country.

He could only write a line in answer:—"I will never give you up as long as I live. And when I say a thing,

I mean it." This was all he was able to write then; and next day, his ship sailed for the Mediterranean.

How many a time did Tregellas pace the deck on those warm summer nights, and long for the good old times when Hawkins and Drake, those fine old heroes and buccaneers, went slashing and pounding and sailing over the Spanish main. Those indeed were the times when, if a man had mettle, there was opportunity to show it. But now, alas! to such sweet reasonableness is the world reduced, that even a Nelson would have no chance, much less a Drake or a Hawkins. The Spaniards are not worth fighting now. We have no quarrel to pick with the Dutch; and as for our natural enemies, the French, we have a foolish *entente cordiale* with them: while some of us have even gone so far in sweet reasonableness as to consider the "silver streak" a mistake instead of a blessing.

Tregellas would think on these things and chafe. Here was the *Centaur*, than which there was no finer ship of her class afloat. And what were her doughty deeds? She had captured some slave dhows off the coast of Zanzibar; and in the Pacific she had done an afternoon's shell practice, shelling a couple of miserable villages, because the natives (being short of provisions) had eaten a Baptist missionary. That was the list of great deeds done by the *Centaur* since the day she was launched. And yet, here was a ship whose guns would have knocked the whole Spanish navy of the time of Drake into a cocked hat in five minutes!

While Tregellas chafed and fumed in secret, and wrote love letters to Edith, and went to balls at Malta (just

to see whether there was any girl half as pretty as Edith), Edith was taken up to London by her aunts, and introduced into society.

We need not follow her there. Suffice it to say that Aunt Rachel worked very hard, and spent a great deal of money, and treated Edith in all respects as though she were an only daughter. By the time the season was over Miss Rachel was almost worn out, and was thankful to get back to her beloved Devonshire, though she would not have confessed so much for the world. Edith had appeared to enjoy her season in town, and she appeared to enjoy herself just as much when she was back in the country. Aunt Rachel, observing her bright looks and sprightly gait, said to herself that that silly love affair had been nipped in the bud. Aunt Elizabeth thought otherwise, but kept her own counsel.

"And yet she seems no nearer settling than before," said Aunt Rachel, when she informed her sister of the sum total that Edith's first London season had cost them. "She had attention enough paid her to satisfy any girl; and I think she was satisfied, for I watched her closely. But it got to a certain point and then stopped. Or, if she did have any offers, she has not told me. Has she said anything to you?"

"Not a word," said Aunt Elizabeth. "But the fact is, Rachel, nowadays young men as a rule don't allow themselves to fall in love with a girl who has no money. You ought to know that. Now for my part I should like to let it be known that all I have will go to the dear child: only I know what your views are, and—and—I should not wish people to make comparisons.

Because of course I know you intend to do what is right by Edith, just as much as I do."

Aunt Rachel made no immediate answer. At length she said she would think about it. There would be plenty of time for her to make up her mind before the next London season.

Aunt Rachel did make up her mind in the way her sister wished. A word or two in confidence to an acquaintance at the beginning of the season was sufficient. The whisper went round that here was a girl with two old maiden aunts rolling in wealth, and she the only creature to inherit it. Before the season was half over, a young man who had worshipped Edith at a safe distance the season before, because it was incumbent on him to marry money, did pluck up courage to address her, after an interview with her aunts to make sure of things pecuniary.

Edith hardly had patience to hear him through. Was this the way such as he told their love? Stammering and hesitating as if reciting a badly learnt lesson; resting upon Aunt Rachel's permission, as if her heart were in Aunt Rachel's keeping! She drew herself up and bade him say no more. She was engaged, she said. The young man went away, feeling that the maiden aunts had treated him very badly.

After this it was necessary that Aunt Rachel should have an explanation with her niece. Edith, on being questioned, acknowledged that Mr. Tregellas did sometimes write to her, and that she answered his letters. Of course she answered his letters!

Aunt Rachel was indignant. She would not have

believed that a de Glanvile would do anything so underhand!

Edith declared she had done nothing underhand. Had she not told her aunt that she would marry no man but Harry Tregellas? A look of sorrow tempered the sternness of Miss Rachel's face.

"Poor, infatuated child! How little you know of practical life! You will never be able to marry, for there is nothing for you to marry upon. He has no prospects, no interest. If you would but take a common sense view of the matter!"

Aunt Elizabeth sighed and shook her head as she thought of her poor half-pay lieutenant digging his potatoes, with his wife drudging in the kitchen.

"If he finds out by and by that he has made a mistake—if he should wish to break our engagement—" Edith's voice faltered and her eyes filled—"I shall not be the one to ask him to keep it. Until then, I am engaged to marry him, and I shall behave myself accordingly."

"And you are going to live on his half-pay, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," said Edith, with superb disdain.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" Aunt Elizabeth murmured.

"Be sure of this," said Aunt Rachel angrily, "I will not have you living upon me."

"I should despise Harry, and I should hate myself," cried Edith, "if we had ever thought of doing anything so mean. Oh, how little you know either of us! We would rather starve."

"Wait until you know what starving means," said Aunt Rachel.

This conversation was duly reported to Harry, in a letter all blurred with Edith's tears. It was not that she believed less in his love; but it was as if a blight had been cast upon it by her aunt's evil forebodings. She was brave outwardly, but in her heart she trembled lest Aunt Rachel's words should come true, after all. What if she should be obliged herself to break the engagement, in order not to ruin Harry!

There was but one thing to do while waiting for his answer; and she tried to do it. She told her aunt that she would in future go no more into society. She would with her permission go away and earn her own living until Harry was ready to take her.

"As long as I am with you," she said, "I am in a false position. People treat me as if I were to expect everything from you: whereas, I neither expect nor hope for anything. I cannot comply with your conditions, and I feel that it would be more comfortable for both of us if I were away."

Aunt Rachel was very angry at this, and declared herself to be insulted. Edith was the most ungrateful, obstinate girl in the world. Miss Elizabeth intervened, and a peace was patched up. She was sure dear Edith did not mean to be ungrateful, and as for obstinacy—she was sure dear Rachel would have been just as obstinate at Edith's age. Obstinacy was a characteristic of the de Glanvile family.

"There are different kinds of obstinacy," said Miss Rachel. "I shall do nothing hastily, but Edith must understand that I do not consider myself bound in any way, after this."

Aunt Elizabeth knew that this was a dark allusion to an alteration of her sister's will. She did her best to smooth her ruffled spirit, but things were no longer comfortable between the elder aunt and her niece; nor was it possible to make them so. Edith could not but feel sorrow at her aunt's anger, and would sigh because of it sometimes, even though her lover's letters bade her have no fear; only be patient. For in a very little while, he said, he hoped to see his way clearer.

Thus the months sped on, till the *Centaur* was back from the Mediterranean, and was being dismantled and paid off at Woolwich. About this time Miss Rachel imagined herself to be in want of sea-air and sea-baths, and took a house on the Esplanade at Plymouth for three months. Edith, who had followed closely the Naval Intelligence in the daily paper, wondered whether her aunt had any secret plan; for it did seem exactly as though she wished to give her a chance of meeting Tregellas. But Miss Rachel had no such plan. She never read the Naval Intelligence, and she supposed the *Centaur* to be safe in the Mediterranean for some months to come. She told her sister, after they had been a short time at the Esplanade, that if Mr. Tregellas's ship came in while they were there, she should take Edith home immediately.

"Of course you would," said Aunt Elizabeth. She did not add that she had seen in the day's paper that the *Centaur* was at Woolwich. Her judgment might be with her sister, but her heart was with her niece.

One morning Edith and her Aunt Elizabeth were taking a walk on the Hoe. They had sat down to rest

on a bench with their faces towards the sea, when a young man was seen by Edith approaching from a distance, whom she felt sure to be Tregellas. She turned away her head, fearing to be mistaken; but when she turned again he had come nearer, and it was unmistakably Tregellas. At the same moment Aunt Elizabeth, who had been looking at the sea and wondering whether her sister would choose a drive or a sail in the afternoon, glanced at her niece and said, alarmed, "Edith, what is the matter? Are you going to faint?"

"Oh no!" and as Edith spoke she became crimson. Miss Elizabeth looked round again and said, "Oh! Is that—h—m—Mr. Tregellas coming towards us?"

"I think it is," Edith whispered.

"Edith! Oh, my dear child, be prudent! I know you think my sister hard, but she has seen the world, and she is right. Yes, she is right, dear, and I wish she were not," said Miss Elizabeth with tears in her eyes.

"Auntie," said Edith, "what can I do? He loves me and I love him. Nothing can alter that. See, he is coming towards us." She put her hand within her aunt's arm and clung closely to her. She had turned pale again, and Miss Elizabeth herself was pale and agitated.

"Don't—don't do anything rash," she murmured; as though she expected Tregellas to take Edith away and marry her then and there.

Tregellas had seen Edith before she saw him. He advanced and shook hands with the ladies, and remarked that it was a fine day. Miss Elizabeth was gracious, and remarked in return that she and her niece were

taking a constitutional, and she supposed Mr. Tregellas was doing the same. As she spoke she moved onward, Edith clinging to her arm. Now that Edith had her lover near, she was stricken dumb. Miss Elizabeth bore the burden of the conversation, while Tregellas, looking over her bonnet, devoured his sweetheart with his eyes. She, after one eloquent glance, turned her face steadily in the direction of the Eddystone Lighthouse.

Miss Elizabeth took one turn up the broad walk and then pretended she was tired and must sit down. Then she suggested that perhaps Edith would like to take another turn, and Tregellas professed himself delighted to escort her. They set off together at a pace compared to which Miss Elizabeth's was that of a snail's funeral.

"How you startled me," Edith began as soon as they were out of earshot. "I thought you were at Woolwich. Why did you not write and tell me you were coming?"

"I had so much to write about," said he, "that I thought I would not write at all."

"But what have you been doing all this time? You wrote me longer letters when you were in the Mediterranean."

Tregellas began in a sing-song voice:—

> "Oh, I've been here and I've been there,
> And I've been every else where,
> Looking for a young thing
> To take her from her mammy."

"What do you mean?" said Edith.

"Oh, I mean—lots of things! I want you to name the day, and then let me measure your finger

—fourth finger of the left hand the prayer-book says—and then, get the ring. Any amount of wedding-rings in the jewellers' windows in George Street. I was looking at them just now." He looked to see if any one was looking, but there was no one near except the old man who is always there with his old telescope, and he did not count as anybody. Tregellas seized Edith's hand and kissed it and murmured, "My darling! Won't you name the day?"

"Name the day! What nonsense!" said Edith.

"Very good sense, I think. After that, I want you to pack up your traps and come with me to America."

"Harry!"

"We could be married before breakfast, get to Liverpool"——

"I think you are out of your senses," said Edith.

"I? I assure you I am perfectly full of common sense. Never had so much of it in my life. There is the old lady signalling, and I haven't had time to say a word yet. I call that too bad."

Edith looked round. "Perhaps Aunt Rachel is coming. I must go, Harry; I feel perfectly bewildered."

They were walking in the direction of the bench on which Miss Elizabeth was sitting. Tregellas, taking Edith's arm in his, wheeled round and began to descend the hill.

"I can't let you go like this, and I won't, either. I have startled you, and now I am bound to explain. Darling, don't you look so pale and frightened. Here it all is in a nutshell. I have retired. I have said

good-bye to the sea, and I am ready to marry you to-morrow and go to America. Say yes, dear."

For a moment Edith could not speak. Then she sighed out, "I wish—I wish that you had never seen me."

Tregellas gave a gasp and dropped her arm. His face became whiter than hers. "What do you mean?" he asked sternly. "You cannot mean that you have changed your mind. You!——"

"I, change my mind?" Edith looked at him with tears trembling on her eyelashes. "What I meant was this: that you have ruined your whole life for me, and that I am not worth it. No woman was ever worth so much, that a man should throw up all he had in the world for her sake. Oh me! I am the most miserable girl alive."

"Oh, my darling, don't say that!" cried Tregellas. "If there had been the hundredth part of a chance of promotion for me, do you suppose I would have thought of retiring? I would have gone on hoping to the end. Not even for your bright eyes would I have left the navy. Come down on the beach and let me tell you all about it."

Edith smiled faintly, but her eyes were full of unshed tears. He led her unresistingly down the steps, and as they walked up and down the narrow margin of shingle between the dripping rocks and the outgoing tide, he told her what had happened recently to bring him to a decision which to her appeared so calamitous.

There had been a new set of regulations promulgated respecting promotion and retirement in the navy. The

sagacity of the Lords of the Admiralty had perceived that the ordinary naval officer was a tough subject and apt to live to a green old age; also that in these piping times of peace there was little chance of his dying other than a natural death, unless he got blown up by the bursting of a new gun; and the consequence was, a block. Therefore, it had been lately enacted: that every lieutenant who, at the age of forty, had not seen a certain number of years of active service, should be compulsorily retired.

"And," said Tregellas, "it might happen to me, as likely as not. My habits would be formed by that time, and there I should be, turned adrift with just enough to keep me from starving, and not enough to help me to any new way of making a living. What is the cry of people on shore, nowadays? How can they find an opening? How can they put their sons out in life? Every profession is over-stocked. How should a man of forty, whose education had been strictly technical, hope to compete with young fellows from Oxford or Cambridge? No, Edith, I saw it was no use blinking the matter. There was a hard fact to face, whether I liked it or not. The prospect of danger never daunted me. I could go into action with as light a heart as you would have when you went to a picnic: but the prospect of being shelved did daunt me, as it has daunted many another fellow in the service. I could tell you of half-a-dozen, splendid fellows, every one of them, fit to go anywhere or do anything. But they are going, and the service will be the poorer for their going. But they could not stand the prospect of rusting out their lives and being

turned adrift after they were forty, any more than I could."

Edith wiped her eyes furtively and murmured that it was a shame.

"You see," Tregellas continued, "a fellow would hold on if he felt sure of having his chance fairly: but he cannot feel sure. While I was in the Mediterranean two fellows were promoted over my head in the most barefaced manner. One of them was a wretched beast who passed out of the *Britannia* after I did, at the very bottom of the list. Of course, some fellow or other must be at the bottom, but still——"

"And you were at the top!" cried Edith. "And you came out first in gunnery, first in everything. Oh, Harry, how much injustice there is in the world!"

"Well, there is, now and then; but not half as much as you would think. However, there was this fellow I'm telling you of. His grandfather was a beggarly viscount. I believe the first viscount had been an admiral, but I'm quite sure none of his brains had descended to the grandson. The other fellow was a fool who couldn't say the letter R to save his life. And he could not make a knot, either. For we were mids together, and I once spent a whole half-holiday afternoon trying to teach him, and all to no purpose. So then I licked him. He was at the bottom of the list when I passed out. But then he was an honourable, and he had an uncle who was an admiral. Naturally, when one sees fellows promoted over one's head whom one knows to be duffers, one can't help feeling disgusted."

Edith asked if there were not regulations against favouritism. Tregellas said there were plenty, but that human nature was as strong in the Admiralty as anywhere else.

"If I were an old admiral I should feel it hard if my word might not go for something. My Lords feel that too, especially when there is good service at the back of it. And a title will always carry weight, unless the owner of it is a scoundrel. So what is one to do? My father was not a viscount, and my uncle, Admiral Tregellas, is dead long ago and forgotten. I know one fellow who is gone into the Brazilian navy, and another into the Turkish. But I would not do anything of that kind without weighing it well beforehand. I do not like the idea of doing anything which would make me less of an Englishman. Do you?"

"Oh no. It would be horrid," said Edith decidedly.

"Well then, darling, I believe I have explained everything, and I hope you see exactly how I stand. Now all that remains is for you to name the day."

Edith withdrew her arm from his. "How you talk, Harry. You know we cannot be married for ever so long."

"Why? You surely don't want bridesmaids and wedding veils and things."

"Oh no!—"

"I do so hate a fuss. My idea of a comfortable wedding is this: to go out some fine morning and get it all over before breakfast. What do you say?"

"I see Aunt Elizabeth coming; she is looking for us," was Edith's reply.

They ascended the steps and went to meet her, Tregellas grumbling because he had hardly had time to say a word. He asked Edith whether she ever walked on the Hoe before breakfast; and Edith replied that she did when the weather was fine.

Then, would she walk with him to-morrow morning? He had so much to tell her.

Edith could only assent with a smile and a look, for by this time Aunt Elizabeth was within earshot. Tregellas took a respectful leave of the ladies, and his bow quite mollified Aunt Elizabeth, who was getting nervous and inclined to be cross with her niece.

"Mr. Tregellas may be a nobody," she said, "but his manners are extremely good. People don't bow like that nowadays—at least not to persons of my age. I like to see a man with a good manner. But Edith, you tiresome child! how long you have been, and I only said you might take a turn. You have given me quite a fright, for Rachel came out and found me sitting alone, and asked what had become of you. I had to tell a dreadful fib. I said you were gone down to watch the tide coming in."

Edith laughed. "The tide is going out, auntie."

"There now! See what it is to tell fibs. Rachel would have come after you herself had I not reminded her what a hill she would have to climb to get back. But—you don't look very happy, child. Have you been quarrelling?"

"Oh no, no," said Edith. "But I feel bewildered, and I cannot explain it all in a minute."

"Don't say a word," cried Aunt Elizabeth. "Don't

tell me any of your private affairs. Better not. Your Aunt Rachel would not like it. And besides, I think she is right, though I do like Mr. Tregellas, the little I have seen of him."

The rest of the day was very long to Edith. She drove with her aunts, read to them, talked to them, played their favourite pieces, and managed as cleverly as usual to be beaten by Miss Rachel at chess. But she seemed to herself to be acting a wearisome part, which it was impossible to perform other than mechanically. She did not sleep well that night. She knew that what she was about to do would be viewed by her Aunt Rachel in the worst light, and yet, she told herself, she was a young woman now, not a child to be kept in leading-strings. She had made up her mind to marry Tregellas as soon as he could marry her, and surely there could be no wrong in her taking an early morning walk with the man who would one day become her husband. That, she thought, would be her defence against her aunt's anger. For had she not said plainly she would never marry any other man? Yet when the next morning came, and she was dressed ready to go out, her mind misgave her, and she did not feel able to leave the house without at least telling her Aunt Elizabeth what she was going to do. If it so turned out that she was in future prevented from seeing Tregellas, even that would be better borne than to be taunted by her Aunt Rachel with having left the house surreptitiously.

She knocked at her Aunt Elizabeth's door and went in. Aunt Elizabeth had begun to call herself an old

woman, but she was still pretty, with her fair complexion and wavy hair which had scarcely any grey in it yet. As Edith bent over her and kissed her she wondered whether she herself would look half as pretty when she was her Aunt Elizabeth's age.

"How pretty you are, auntie," she said, when Miss Elizabeth opened her astonished eyes.

Miss Elizabeth sat up and opened her eyes still wider. "Good heavens, child! You have not come at this hour to tell me that; and with your hat on!"

Edith, with her face hidden in the counterpane and her arm thrown round Miss Elizabeth, murmured that she was going out to meet Mr. Tregellas, and could not bear to go in an underhand manner, especially after her aunt's kindness to her yesterday.

Miss Elizabeth was silent for a moment. Then she said in a peevish tone, "I suppose you don't perceive that if I don't get up and go and tell your Aunt Rachel what you are about, I shall be acting in an underhand manner?"

Edith made no answer.

"It does not strike you in that light, I daresay."

"Auntie," said Edith after a moment's silence, "you must do as you think right by Aunt Rachel, and I must do as I think right by the man whom I am engaged to marry."

Miss Elizabeth threw herself back on her pillows and gave a sigh which was almost a groan. "There never were such people as the de Glanviles for obstinacy, and there never will be. It is all wrong, of course; but

I suppose you cannot help yourself, child. It is in your blood."

Edith looked up with a smile. "Call it fidelity, auntie."

Miss Elizabeth sighed. "Fidelity! What good has fidelity done me? I might have married after good fortune came to me. Women have married older than I was, and not half as goodlooking. But I could not make up my mind. Such fools we women are! I look at you, Edith, and wonder whether fidelity will stand you in better stead than it has stood me. When I was your age, child, I did not think I should live and die alone. I said, as you say, that I would marry that man or none. Well, well! You see how it turned out as far as I was concerned. He was poor, and he was impatient, and he had no prospects; just like your Mr. Tregellas."

"But Harry would never——," Edith began.

"Ah, yes, just what I said to myself. If words could have made a man faithful!—Even now, Edith, I recollect the words he used, and the tone of his voice. And——, but what does it matter?"

"Oh, auntie! dear auntie," cried Edith as she kissed her aunt's hand, "the clock is striking, and he will think I am not coming. I must go."

"Edith," said Miss Elizabeth, as she took her hand and looked into her face, "you are not going to run away?"

"No," said Edith. "Indeed I am not."

"On your honour?"

"On my honour. Aunt, how can you ask me such a thing?"

"I know that if my sweetheart had proposed my going with him to Gretna Green, I should have gone. He did not propose it, and here I am. If your sweetheart proposes it I believe you will go."

"There is no Gretna Green now, and if there were——"

"Go and take your walk, child; and mind you are back in time for breakfast. I won't say a word to Rachel for just this once, but I will not bind myself further," said Miss Elizabeth, with an assumption of sternness which did not suit her as well as it did her sister.

Sir Francis Drake, they say, played bowls on the Hoe, and found it well adapted to that game. Heroes do not play bowls there any longer, but it is used for parades, cricket matches, and carpet beating. On sunny days numbers of old gentleman and ladies may be seen diligently pacing up and down the gravel, and scores of lovers have exchanged their vows there for want of a better place. The Hoe, bare and bald and treeless as it is, is by no means the ideal lover's walk; yet here in the early morning, Edith, clinging to her lover's arm, paced contentedly up and down. Content is a poor word for the rapture which filled their hearts. To hold her hand in his under the convenient cloak and the friendly umbrella; to look into her eyes and see himself reflected there. What could Tregellas ask more?

And yet, after a few such rapturous meetings, Tregellas became uneasy, dissatisfied, almost moody. Why would she procrastinate? Why would she always

change the subject when he spoke of their marriage day? One would suppose she intended to marry him some time in the next century. He must be doing something; at least he must begin to look for something to do. And would his Edith be so cruel as to let him go to America alone?

After these meetings in the early morning, Edith, with her lover's words ringing in her heart and memory throughout the livelong day, would put the question to herself in another form. Could she be so cruel to herself as to let him go to America alone?

Miss Rachel began to remark that Edith was getting pale and thin. She was losing her appetite, and it was evident sea air did not agree with her. She would take her home next week if she did not look better by that time.

"Surely," she said to Miss Elizabeth in private, "she is not pining for that young man!"

Miss Elizabeth turned away lest her sister should see her blush. "I hope not," she said, "But I do not understand Edith at all," which was quite true.

It was on a Monday morning when Edith went again to her Aunt Elizabeth's room. It was to be their last day in Plymouth; for Edith, while declaring herself to be perfectly well, had looked paler and thinner, and as Miss Rachel had observed, was actually getting nervous. Else why should she start as she did when the postman's knock was heard? The air of the moors would set her up no doubt, and they were to leave Plymouth on the Tuesday.

It was quite early, but Miss Elizabeth was wide

awake, for she had been thinking of her niece and was feeling anxious.

"You are a tiresome child," she said as Edith kissed her. "I have been awake half the night worrying myself about you."

"Dear auntie," said Edith, "do not worry yourself about me any more."

"Are you going out again to meet Mr. Tregellas?"

"Yes. He has been in London for the last five days. I believe he only came back last night. He made an appointment to meet me on Monday morning."

"Well, my dear, of course you will go your own way. You are past caring about appearances, I don't doubt. But in my young days let me tell you it would have been thought common and disgraceful for a young lady to be going out to meet her lover at an hour when only milkmen and dust carts were abroad. That is the plain truth for you, my dear, as your Aunt Rachel would tell it you if she knew of these goings on of yours."

"Give me a kiss, auntie," said Edith. "This will be the last time I shall go out to meet him."

"Edith," said Miss Elizabeth, "you have ill-repaid my kindness. You are going to elope. Oh, Edith, Edith!"

"I am not going to elope," said Edith earnestly. "I promise you to be back before breakfast."

When Edith was gone Miss Elizabeth could no longer remain in her bed. Between her wish to be candid to her sister and her wish to be kind to her niece she was in a state of perturbation from which she was only released at breakfast time when the urn, the

hot rolls, and Edith appeared simultaneously. Thank heaven, she thought, as she took her place at the breakfast table, after to-morrow there would be an end of these stolen interviews. If Mr. Tregellas should present himself at their own house her sister would know how to receive him.

The morning was windy, with spurts of rain coming up from the west. The ladies remained indoors, and Edith read aloud while her aunts cut out and stitched flannel garments for their poor people. All the de Glanviles had given freely of their abundance, and these two daughters of the house were no exception to the rule. At length there was a pause in the reading and working. It was almost luncheon time, and Edith sat by the window and watched the clouds driving past, with a smile on her face and a look of repose which might have struck even an unobservant person. Miss Rachel who considered herself a very observing person, saw that she had more colour to-day, and nodded to her sister as much as to say that there was not much harm done after all.

There was a knock and ring at the front door and Edith started up with a vivid blush, but sat down again. In another moment Mr. Tregellas was announced.

Aunt Rachel, strong in the knowledge that this was their last day in Plymouth, was fairly civil. Aunt Elizabeth hardly said a word, and Edith did not attempt to take part in the conversation.

Aunt Rachel inquired whether he intended to stay long in Plymouth? She had already informed him that they were on the point of returning home. In reply,

Tregellas said, that he had come from London the evening before, and that his stay would be short. Then a look passed between him and Edith, and Edith rose and stood beside him. He, too, rose, and they stood side by side before the Misses de Glanvile.

"I have a word to say," he began.

Miss Rachel was equal to the situation. "Let me beg you not to say it," she rejoined with suavity. "Edith, pray go back to your seat. Mr. Tregellas, I think I know what you would say. I am sorry for you, but my judgment remains unaltered. It grieves me to appear harsh; but, standing as I do in the place of a parent, I am bound to consider the true interests of my niece rather than her fancies. Pray believe that apart from my niece I wish you very well, and relieve me from the need of saying anything more."

"We, too," said the young lieutenant, "have considered our true interests, and have acted accordingly. Feeling that our two lives are bound up together, we naturally have shrunk from the misery of being parted for an indefinite time, and—"

"Pray, pray, let me hear no more of this," said Miss Rachel. "Edith, you had better go to your room. Mr. Tregellas, it is quite impossible for me to entertain the idea of marriage between you and my niece. I dare say you imagine yourself very much in love, but you are very young yet, and so is she. You will fall in love twenty times yet, and swear each time to be the last, no doubt. That is always the way."

"I hope," said Tregellas, "that this will be the last.

It ought to be, for we have been man and wife since seven o'clock this morning."

Miss Rachel turned pale. "Edith de Glanvile," she said, "what farce is this?"

Tregellas looked at his wife and nodded. She put her hand in her pocket and drew out a paper. "My marriage certificate," she said in a low voice, as she laid it on the table before her aunt.

"This is the most disgraceful thing I ever heard of," said Miss Rachel. "Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"By no means," said Edith proudly.

"You, a de Glanvile, to marry clandestinely!"

"There was nothing clandestine about it," interposed Tregellas. "Had you gone to St. Andrew's Church for the last three Sundays you would have heard the banns called."

"Aunt Rachel," said Edith, her voice faltering a little, "I would have gone on waiting, hoping that in time you might give your consent. But when Mr. Tregellas—my husband—retired and made up his mind to go to America, my courage failed. I thought I might never see him again, and—Oh, Aunt Rachel, do not be so hard on me. Remember how I love him!"

Miss Rachel's face wore an expression of mingled anger and perplexity. "I have yet to learn," she said, "that starvation is pleasanter in America than it is in England."

Miss Elizabeth fell on Edith's neck and kissed her. "Oh you wicked, wicked girl!" she exclaimed. Then she leaned back in her chair and began to cry heartily.

"Luncheon is on the table," said the butler opening the door.

Miss Rachel rose. Of all things in the world, the thing she hated most was that a family quarrel should be made the talk of the servants' hall. Here was a thing that was done and could not be undone. In two seconds she made up her mind what line she would take.

"Mr. Tregellas," she said graciously, "won't you stay to luncheon?" she paused and then added,—"and take a drive with us afterwards."

CHAPTER V.

A CHAPTER WITH A SNAKE IN IT.

OPPOSITE the hotel was a wooden building in Queen Anne style, neatly painted within and without, and adorned on the street side by a Gothic porch. This was the office of Major Forepaw, the shepherd, or, to speak accurately, the deputy shepherd, of the infant settlement. Other shepherds there were, but they were scattered, and some of them had other flocks to tend, and stocks—if not flocks—to water. But the deputy shepherd was supposed to be always on the spot, ready to counsel, direct, and warn, the coming crowd of immigrants from that effete country which in its drivelling decadence has peopled a hemisphere.

The Major was tall, stout, and square-shouldered; his hair was grizzled, and his moustache and goatee of a fine blue-black. His lips were generally compressed, and there was often a frown on his brow. Some said that zeal for Harmonia was eating him up; others, that good living at the hotel and the lack of needful exercise were doing their appointed work, and that he was being eaten up by dyspepsia. In conversation with his more

intimate acquaintances he would allude darkly to neuralgic sufferings from overwork, and to the desirability of seeking recuperation at the springs, if only he could put aside his duties. A word or two may be said as to the springs to which the Major alluded. Though he always spoke of them as The Springs, it must not be supposed that they are the only healing waters to be found south of Dixie's Line, but only that the Major had a more than ordinary interest in them.

About two hundred miles from Harmonia as the crow flies, had lately come into existence a summer hotel and boarding-house, named Alum Spring House. The spring was conducted into a fountain in the vestibule, where, under a lithograph portrait of Jefferson Davis, the boarders drank the alum water and were healed. To each new boarder a pamphlet was presented by the spirited proprietor. This pamphlet, purporting to set forth the virtues of the alum water, and the elegant comfort of the Alum Spring House, had been written by the Major himself, with the help of a dictionary and a scientific and medical encyclopædia; and gave a full account of his own desperate condition when he first reached the original Alum Spring House, a small wooden structure, hardly equal to the accommodation of half a dozen guests. Sceptics might refuse to believe that a human being so honeycombed by disease as the Major represented himself, could be healed by any spring. Nevertheless, there was the Major, square-shouldered and loud-voiced; and there was the pamphlet, with the endorsements of a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of a whole-

sale druggist of Philadelphia, of the proprietor of a dry-goods store at Atlanta, and of two Justices of the Peace.

To prevent misconception, let it be said before going further, that Major Forepaw's title did not represent actual rank in the army. He had at one time (no one could say quite how long ago, but it must have been before his moustache became blue-black) been employed with a surveying party somewhere down in South Carolina, on the line of a projected railway. So far as the line had been begun, it was now obliterated by the semi-tropical growth of Carolina jessamine and trumpet-creeper. Almost the only result—except the break up of a company which had never justified its existence—had been that whereas the surveyor's assistant had gone into the swamps and pine barrens plain Dave Forepaw, he emerged therefrom a full-blown major, with a tendency to ague, a smattering of geology obtained from text-books belonging to his chief, a talent for drawing up reports, floating doubtful enterprises, and, in general, making out two and two to be five, for the benefit of the public and himself.

The manager's office consisted of two rooms opening into each other. The outer room contained a table, a few chairs, some spittoons, a box of tobacco free to all comers, a wax model of a mammoth pumpkin grown in the experimental garden, and a cabinet of mineralogical specimens, more or less correctly labelled. The walls were hung with maps of the Southern States, an orographic view of the United States, and a chart showing the isothermal lines from the State of New

York southwards. Every one knows what elements of unexpectedness exist in an isothermal line. These isotherms, if they proved anything at all, proved beyond a doubt the truth of the report disseminated by the Board of Directors who had created the settlement known till lately by the homely, local name of Deer-creek. Here, in the centre of Harmonia, the garden of Eden would have been placed, had it suited the views of Providence to locate our first parents in the New World rather than the Old.

There are always loungers in a new settlement. There are the natives of the district who come to see what the new city is like. There are the strangers who have come from the four points of the compass, uncertain where to pitch their tent; desiring, yet fearing, to make up their minds: and there are the strangers who have no minds to make up. With these three classes the manager's office became a favourite resort. By the time Harmonia Street had houses on both sides, the office had become almost as popular as the whiskey saloon or the bar of the hotel, and had left far behind the post-office, which combined under the same proprietorship a grocery and dry-store. The manager's inner room possessed a shelf crammed with books containing information of every possible kind; statistical, geological, hydrographical, agricultural; it was all there. Besides the bookshelf there was a big desk for the manager, and a small desk for the assistant manager, who was a Scotchman named Macfarlane. It was understood that whenever the manager retired to the inner room and shut the door, there was serious

business on hand, and loungers must forbear intrusion. But on most days the door of communication stood open, and the Major from within would shout forth a welcome to all comers. There was a certain formula in the mode of extending this welcome which the Major had never been known to depart from. Hearing footsteps outside, he would exclaim, "Come in!" As soon as the visitor was within the office the invitation would be repeated. When he became visible in the inner room the Major's hand, adorned with a heavy paste ring, would be stretched forth to grasp the hand of the visitor, and the Major's voice would exclaim in strident tones, "How do you do, sir? Sit down." Thenceforward, if the visitor were an old acquaintance, he would find the burden of sustaining the conversation laid upon him. But, if he chanced to be a newcomer desiring information on the growth of Harmonia, and the likelihood of making money in the settlement, then indeed, the Major's eloquence was poured forth as from a fountain, and the newcomer found himself not only informed, but douched with information. So much so, that men whose minds were endowed with only a limited receptivity, had been known to leave the Major's *sanctum* in a kind of daze, and take refuge in the open street, where they relieved their mental congestion by profane swearing.

Macfarlane, the assistant manager, was a man of different stamp. He had taken his degree at Aberdeen, and might have aspired to greater things than a post under Major Forepaw. On leaving college he had come to America, hoping to find there a better opening

than he could look forward to in his own country. After various changes, now for the better, now for the worse, he had at length drifted southwards, and had been attracted to Harmonia. Having by this time married an American wife, and being in the receipt of a salary which, if not handsome, was sufficient, it seemed probable that he would take root and, being still young, grow up with the country. He had a passion for scientific gardening, and under his care the experimental garden of Harmonia bid fair to rival in value more than one botanical garden in Europe. Here were plots devoted to experiments, with plants possessing an economic value. Here might be seen the ramie plant, the jute, and the castor. Here, in deference to the fad of one party among the directors, was a nursery of tea plants. A little way off, in deference to the fad of the party of theoretical sericulturists, might be seen a plot planted with the Russian mulberry. The plot of earth-nuts was Macfarlane's own private fad. There were also plots devoted to the growth of the opium poppy and the tobacco plant; though a certain section of the Board was opposed to the cultivation of the latter on æsthetico-religious grounds. A portion of the enclosure was laid out as a kitchen garden, and here Macfarlane felt himself to be in his glory. His vegetables were always the best and the finest of their kind, and would have taken first prizes at the State fair had there been the means of transport. It may be said with truth that the living testimony of that acre of kitchen garden did more to induce immigrants to settle in Harmonia than did all the second-hand eloquence of the Major.

There was only one thing which baffled Macfarlane. He could make Lima beans, and tomatoes, and yams, and egg plants grow, but he could not grow Scotch kale. To be able to show a well-grown plot of that homely vegetable would be, as he felt, a bigger feather in his cap than to have acres of the more rampant, semi-tropical food plants to show to visitors.

Tregellas, while feeling that prudence required him to see the reverse of the medal, was nevertheless conscious of a certain degree of fascination in the view presented by the manager of the glorious possibilities of the settlement. Nor was Mr. Denning's enthusiasm entirely lost on him; especially after Mr. Garlick's assurance that his enthusiasm was disinterested. When a young man is told by a person more than double his own age that it is men such as he, gentlemen by birth and education, who are required to make for an obscure spot in a wild region a name throughout the whole civilised world, he may be pardoned if he ends by believing in some degree: especially when he is a young man who, though not given to vain-gloriousness, has some belief in himself and a modest tenacity of purpose, added to habits of moral and mental discipline and a large degree of respect for his elders.

"We want gentlemen of birth and education to build up Harmonia," was Mr. Denning's formula.

"We want gentlemen of culture and refinement," was the Major's variant on the same theme.

When this was repeated to Edith, she asked her husband (as well she might) where they were to look for the unrefined, uncultured gentlemen. But Tregellas

said that was only the Major's idiotic way of putting things.

Mr. Garlick's voice was perhaps the most potent of any, because of the note of caution which ran through his utterances.

"Don't be in a hurry," he would say when Tregellas asked his opinion of a desirable quarter section. "Take time, take time. I am no farmer, but I have no doubt there are plenty of quarter sections as good as that."

At the time the Tregellases arrived, Major Forepaw had not long returned from Washington, and it was supposed that his visit to the national capital was in some way connected with the well-being of the infant settlement. He said himself that he had been in communication with the Department of Agriculture, and left his hearers to draw what inferences they pleased. Shortly after his return, large packages of books arrived at the office, and parcels of seeds of various sorts for distribution among the settlers. These were eagerly sought for, not only for their supposed intrinsic value, but as so many evidences of the fostering care of a truly paternal government. It seemed to the humbler minds among the settlers that they were placed on a higher level by being so distinguished. What monarchical government would have sent peas and beans and agricultural reports to such as they? Even those who did not look upon themselves as belonging to the humbler sort were not above receiving presents from government, though they would have resented the imputation of being too poverty-stricken to purchase their own peas and beans. The conscientious ones among the re-

cipients took care to observe the directions printed on each packet. They got note-books for the purpose of recording (as per desire of the Commissioner of Agriculture) the times of sowing, of sprouting, and of æstivation. Not a few passed an evil quarter of an hour in searching in pocket dictionaries for that polysyllable. Note-book in hand, they watched their miniature crops of maize and peas and beans, of mignonette and tassel flower, and jotted down their observations as to the adaptability of these to the climate and soil of Harmonia. This obliged some of the women to spend in the open air time which else might have been spent over æsthetic fancy-work, and was so far beneficial: so that in this one instance it may be said the Agricultural Department builded better than it knew. If the peas and beans were full of weevil, and if the maize when half grown was destroyed by bunt, we may be sure that the heart of a paternal government would have been sorely grieved had the fact come to its knowledge that it had been the instrument of disseminating a noxious insect and a destructive fungus in a country where till then both had been happily unknown.

Edith, sitting dully day after day in the hotel parlour with her own thoughts for company, found in truth that her honeymoon was over, and that the serious business of matrimony had begun. For her husband, away day after day, riding hither and thither among the outlying settlers, would come home at night too tired to play the lover; or else too busy, having to make notes and compare the various items of information he had received during the day from persons who, having no land to sell,

might be supposed to be disinterested. She found herself thrown for companionship upon the lady boarders of the hotel, with none of whom had she anything in common. She would have preferred to shut herself up in her own room, but abstained from doing so lest it should be told her husband—for gossip in the hotel parlour was as rife as on an ocean steamer—and give Harry the impression that she disliked the idea of settling in Harmonia. In truth, though she mixed with the ladies a great deal more than she cared to do, the impression among them was that she was a stuck-up young woman, who thought herself too good for her company, and who had no grounds for so much self-sufficiency. She made no display of jewellery; instead of the fashionable costumes in which a bride usually blossoms forth, she was studiously plain in her attire. Her aunts would have given her fashionable dresses without stint, but Edith had insisted on being supplied only with what was likely to be useful to her in the unknown wilds to which she was about to follow her husband. It was not until it happened to leak out through a chance word spoken by Edith, that she had been presented at Court, that the lady boarders conceded tacitly that perhaps Mrs. Tregellas had some slight reason for being stuck-up. This, however, made but little difference to Edith. Mrs. Haverstock, so far from improving the acquaintance, treated her with marked coldness as soon as she found that she could neither be induced to subscribe to her favourite magazine, nor be roused to feel an interest in the whereabouts of the Ten Tribes. There was but one exception to the prevail-

ing coldness; Kate Haverstock posed herself as the champion of the young married woman, and would hear no detractory word spoken of her without taking up the cudgels on her behalf. While Mrs. Haverstock's demeanour was an unequal mixture of earthly ill-breeding and sanctified hauteur, Kate flaunted her liking for Edith with the impulsive sincerity of a raw schoolgirl, and was in fact Edith's warmest and truest friend, as summer friendships go. Edith neither sought the girl's company nor avoided it. She endured it with unvarying equanimity, though she would oftenest have preferred solitude. From Kate Haverstock she learnt what there was to learn of the Haverstock family history: it seemed a history of cross-purposes and wrongheadedness, a Gordian knot which would not be improved by cutting, and must remain an inextricable tangle. Mrs. Haverstock's time was taken up, and a large portion of the family income spent, in the writing of innumerable letters and the printing of incoherent pamphlets on prophecy, of which it may be said with certainty that neither the writer nor the readers (if any) understood the matter. This appeared to be the work to which she had sacrificed the comfort of her husband and the supervision of her family. Kate had been transferred from one cheap school to another, and had returned to her family at the age when a girl's education is supposed to be finished, lacking in everything which the Colonel could have desired in his daughter with the exception of a sunny temper and a warm heart. Edith, when she was not occupied with thinking of her husband and their plans for the future, would find her-

self vaguely wondering how such a gentlemanly man could have such a second-rate wife and daughters. But the question might have been easily answered. The Colonel had done only what so many men do: he had married early and in haste, and he had had long years of leisure to repent. Perhaps, even more than the Colonel, the elder daughter interested Edith when she had learnt her history, as she soon did from Kate. She had married quite young, Edith was told; she had been disappointed in a husband who had at first been deeply in love with her; and had then, under Mrs. Haverstock's influence, separated from him on the ground of incompatibility of temper. This had happened some years ago. That the step then taken had brought her no happiness was evident to the most casual observer. She was always ailing; there was hardly a trace of girlish prettiness left in her face; her demeanour was languid and listless, as if life held no further hope for her. Her nervous shrinking from society bordered on eccentricity; and when she found herself in company she maintained a moody silence.

Besides the Haverstocks there were a Mr. and Mrs. Lovett, who were boarding at the hotel until their house should be finished. Mr. Lovett was an inoffensive person who never came into the ladies' parlour. He was away all day at the farm he had bought, superintending the farm work and the fitting up of the house he had built. Mrs. Lovett was a lady who had had losses. She was fond of holding forth when she could get a listener on the past glories of her life in Australia, where her husband had been in the way of making a

great fortune by corn. It was then that she had had two maids and a gig and everything comfortable about her. It was then that she had known a bishop, and had been entertained by a baronet's lady, and had almost been in the same house as the Lord Chief Justice, only he happened to leave the day before she arrived. As to the glories of their Australian life, Mr. Lovett himself had been heard to observe that they had gone up like a rocket, and had come down like the stick; and that was the only allusion he had ever made to their residence in that part of the world. Mrs. Lovett, like Mrs. Haverstock, had had the misfortune to marry the wrong person, and was not backward in telling of her misfortune. If she had thought, she said, when she married Tom, that she was to be brought to this—and she would look round the hotel parlour with the air of a person whose abode had been in marble halls—if she had thought of being brought to *this*—she would have acted quite differently. There could be little sympathy between Edith and a woman of this stamp. Once Edith, supposing that Mrs. Lovett had been a farmer's daughter, innocently asked her for information on some practical part of housekeeping such as falls to the lot of a farmer's wife. But she was quickly given to understand that Mrs. Lovett was, if possible, more ignorant of such matters than she was herself. Mrs. Lovett did not pretend to enter into the mysteries of bacon-curing and dairying: she was a lady (as she told Edith) who liked to have things comfortable about her. If her husband wanted a dairy let him hire a dairy woman. If he wanted bacon cured, let him attend to it himself. She

posed as a woman anxious to do her duty, but determined to stand upon her rights. She gave Edith scraps of good advice as to her own conduct when she should begin housekeeping. She bade her remember that it was always the willing horse which had the hardest pull, and that any man was always ready to trample on any woman (particularly his wife) if he had the chance. To Edith this was rank blasphemy. But Mrs. Lovett would tell her with cruel frankness that however much a young woman might adore her husband, that husband had his faults like any other husband; and that the wife must of necessity find them out some day; when the bitterness of her disappointment would be in exact proportion to the blindness of her adoration. Perhaps a young wife who adores her husband can never be popular among the generality of women. There are so many who have "got over" their own season of adoration, and who believe in all sincerity that other women have to "get over" it too. It is not natural, they think, for a woman to go on adoring, any more than it is natural for her to continue young and beautiful. At any rate, no woman likes to acknowledge even to her most secret self that her own husband is of an inferior sort when compared with any other woman's husband. Even a woman's logic perceives that if a man can inspire a lasting adoration in his wife, it must be because he possesses some quality in which the ordinary husband is lacking. And the inference is intolerable and not to be endured. So that Edith Tregellas, a perfectly happy wife, without a regret for the past or a fear for the future, was half disliked by some, and half pitied

by others, and was popular with none of the ladies except Kate Haverstock. She might have been popular among the young men boarding at the hotel, had she cared for popularity, for there were many quite enough *au fait* with the ways of the Old World to know that flirting with a married woman was quite as amusing and a great deal safer than flirting with a girl. But Edith had neither eyes nor ears for any man except her husband, and was cold even to haughtiness to the men of her acquaintance, with the exception of old fogies like the Colonel and Mr. Denning, and that oldest fogy of all, Mr. Garlick, who demonstrated his approval of her by showing her his latest entomological captures.

As the season advanced the hotel, which had been half empty when Edith and her husband arrived, became full to overflowing. They were a motley crowd; some of them were plain people who had been driven out of their native land by successive seasons of agricultural depression; but the majority were like Mrs. Lovett, very genteel: so much so that, whereas their foremothers had known how to bake and brew, and had risen by candlelight to do their dairy work, these ladies knew not how to do one single useful household thing, nor could they rise from their beds till a maid had brought them their morning cup of tea. In their chats with the older boarders there were vague allusions to the better days they had seen; to the grandeurs and the comforts they had left behind. And there was hardly one among them who did not hint at one time or another that she was meant for a better lot than this: that Harmonia, in fine, meant extinguishment.

These people began to think it odd that, while one and another of the later comers bought land and began to build, the Tregellases who had come so much sooner, should not yet have made up their minds. Edith herself had wished from the first that it were possible for them to live anywhere, even in a shanty, rather than continue at the hotel where the society was distasteful to her and the charges beyond her husband's means. She had told him gently of her wish, and having told him, and had his answer in the negative, she had held her peace; and beguiled the time of waiting by studying the various books on architecture which abounded among the boarders, and which they were always lending to one another. By and by, finding that there was nothing practical in these books, she returned them all with thanks, and her husband bought others, which, having read, he heartily wished he could return to the booksellers with thanks. It really did seem at length as if they would have to plan their own house to suit their own fortunes.

And yet there was a multiplicity of styles to choose from! There was the Italian-Gothic villa and the American-Gothic villa: there was the Italo-Americo-Gothic, and the Bracketed, and the Eclectic style. There was a villa-farmhouse (much recommended) with a tower whence the weather-wise farmer could discern the signs and prognosticate a clear night or the reverse, better than it was possible for him to do, standing outside his door in the old-fashioned way. This, and the Italo-Americo-Gothic, were the favourite styles among the feminine portion of the guests. But these transat-

lantic orders of modern architecture were presently scoffed out of sight and hearing by certain new arrivals, and then the talk was all of Queen Anne cottages *à la* Kensington (*vice* Queen Anne *à la* Boston) and Jacobean mansions and æsthetic furniture and right colouring. And it was laid down as an article of faith that the house in which a man lived was an index to his moral character.

It was wondrous how poor souls who had lived all their lives in unæsthetic houses for which they paid rent, drank in this new creed. Tregellas openly scoffed at it, but it was a creed which bid fair to do a great deal of good to house builders and decorators before it should be superseded by a simpler one.

Edith read these books, one and all, with their maxims respecting the beautiful (spelt with a big B) and their comprehensive plans and their axioms on colouring, until she felt bewildered, and longed more than ever for a plain shanty. Her own private maxim which she was determined to live up to, was a very simple one: "Keep within your means." There was one book in two quarto volumes which professed to teach the tyro how to build his house for next to nothing; and Edith, leaving all the rest, studied this book faithfully. But it was laid down as a fundamental principle that a house must have a cellar. And how to get the cellar dug for next to nothing at the prices now being asked by unskilled labour in Harmonia, the book did not say.

One day Tregellas came in and asked his wife to ride with him, and Edith, delighted to escape the solitude of her own room and the gossip of the ladies'

parlour, was soon in the saddle and cantering by her husband's side.

After a delightful stretch of four miles on the Harmonia road, they turned down a track which resembled the path through the wilderness by which they had reached Harmonia. It was level in places, and then again full of rocks and boulders, and interspersed with gullies and holes washed by the summer storms. In front of them was an undulating plain, a long line of low hills with more hills behind, and on the horizon, a mountain range of deepest blue, capped with clouds piled high. Winding round the foot of one of the lowest hills they came, unexpectedly to Edith, to a little valley through which a clear stream wound its way. Towards the north, the surrounding hills were covered with firs; while the southern and eastern slopes were filled with a varied growth of nature's planting; such as oak, walnut, and hickory; with maples, tulip trees and magnolias on the margin of the stream, and an undergrowth of dogwood, red bud, and wild cherry.

The place was very solitary. Except for the track by which they had come, it might have been supposed to be unknown and unexplored since the world began. They dismounted and sat down on a boulder by one of the many brooklets which fed the principal stream; and watched the red birds flying in and out of the tangle of wild vine which overhung the water. Edith sat silent, full of delight at the beauty of the scene. Tregellas sat and looked at Edith's face.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he said at last.

"I think the garden of Eden must have been something like this," said Edith.

"That means that you like it?"

"Oh, Harry, if we might set up our nest in a place like this!"

"We will do so, if you agree to it. I brought you here on purpose to have your opinion of the place. I have been over it before, with an old man named Ellacombe, a west country farmer, who seems to know thoroughly what he is about, and talks less than a good many of the people here. He said he saw nothing against the place; and really, after riding about and seeing the whole settlement, I like this better than any place I have seen. But there will be a drawback or two, of course. There is not a place in the world without its drawback."

Edith asked what was the drawback to this enchanting spot.

In the first place, Tregellas said, it was not actually within the Harmonia settlement; and they could never expect a good road to be made to it unless they made one themselves. In the second place, it was more than four miles from Harmonia; and his Edith might feel it lonely sometimes.

"Oh, Harry," she cried, "if those are all the drawbacks, please buy the place to-morrow! I can never feel half as lonely in this beautiful wilderness with you, as I do now; spending day after day at that ugly hotel, in the midst of a crowd of people who care as little for me as I do for them. There is only one drawback; one real one, that you have not thought of. I don't know how

to make bread, and from what I hear the negroes are not likely to make it to your liking. And I fear it will be too far away to have bread sent from the hotel bakery."

"Oh," said Tregellas, "you will have plenty of time to learn. The house is not built yet. Surely there must be some one who could give you a hint."

Edith feared not. Most of the ladies did not pretend to know anything about bread making; and one or two who did, said that rules could not be given for the process; it was guess work from beginning to end.

Tregellas said there must be rules for every chemical process, and he did not believe bread making to be any exception.

"But after all, why should people try to make a mystery of it?" he cried. "It is really very simple. You take your yeast, flour, water, and salt, in due proportion; you mix them, and let the mixture rise. And then you bake it. It is just as simple as A B C," said Tregellas in blessed ignorance.

"Simple or not, I mean to try till I succeed. Why should not a lady learn how to make bread as well as an ignorant servant? Oh, Harry, how happy we shall be, in our own home, on our own land! We could never have hoped for that had not you brought me here. We might have been sighing in vain for each other, with seas dividing us."

"Then you will not dislike the solitude? For I shall be busy by and by, dear, you must remember; and you will not always have me at hand."

"But I can always think of you," said Edith, "and I

can always be doing something for you. What more do I want?"

He kissed her. "I think you must be very different from most women. When I told old Ellacombe I liked the look of this land, he said, 'Tis a fairish bit, but it's out o' the way. Won't the young missus be whisht?'"

Edith laughed. "A woman as happy as I am does not know how to be whisht."

"Then that is all right; and I will see Forepaw to-morrow," said Tregellas. They walked a little way together, and came upon a flat-topped mound, which Tregellas said must be of Indian construction. There were graves half hidden in a tangle of blackberry and sassafras; and there was a clump of trees in the middle, and the remains of a fence round part of the eminence. Walking a little further, they came upon a flat stone let into the soil, and the crumbling remains of a chimney. This showed that there had been at some time a habitation there. Here white men and women and children had lived and died; here was the forgotten hearthstone; here were forgotten graves. They returned to the place where they had been sitting by the brooklet, and once more sat down in happy silence.

"Harry," said Edith presently, "if you do buy this place, I want you to promise me something."

"Say on, O queen, and I will perform it. Do you want the half of my kingdom?"

"No. I only want you to fence in that poor little graveyard, and not let it be ploughed over."

Tregellas declared that to be a very easy matter. He

did not suppose it would make the sligthest difference one way or the other. They walked about and tried to fix on a site for the house. It must not be where they had found the hearthstone, Tregellas said; because that was too close to the water, and those innocent-looking creeks were not to be trusted. Then Edith once more seated herself and took out her sketch-book, wishing to make a pencil drawing for her aunts. Tregellas walked a short distance and stood at the water's edge. He turned over the loose stones with his foot, and watched the helgomites and the cray-fish creeping about in the little pools in a dreamy, absent way. He did not often thus indulge himself, but he was very happy at seeing his wife's delight at the prospect of owning this place, which he had himself taken a fancy to at first sight. It was indeed pleasant to think that, poor as he was, he might become the possessor of such a beautiful tract of country. And nest-building would be the next thing. How well he had done to marry his beautiful Edith and bring her to America where there was room for everybody! He was turning to his wife to say something of this, when he saw what made him exclaim peremptorily, "Don't move!"

Edith sat still, a little startled, supposing a big spider must be crawling over her. "Please take it off," she entreated. She knew it was very unheroic to dread a spider, and she always tried to overcome her dread, but she never succeeded. She did prevent herself from screaming aloud, lest her husband should be ashamed of her, but she could not prevent herself from turning pale.

There was a fluttering and twittering in the vine thicket, and the redbirds flew out uttering their abrupt note of alarm. A snake, mottled and spotted in pink and black, had glided over the top of the thicket close to the spot where Edith was sitting. It was gone in a few seconds, but the seconds seemed hours to Harry, who only had a light riding whip in his hand.

"Thank heaven," he exclaimed, taking her hand in his, "you can obey promptly. Had you moved your head when I bade you sit still, that brute would have bitten you, and you would have been dead long before I could have got you back to Harmonia."

"Was it a snake?" Edith asked calmly.

"A moccasin, four feet long."

She drew a long breath. "I thought it was a spider! Why, Harry, we shall have to walk about our Eden with big sticks."

Tregellas was astonished at her terror at a trifle and her coolness before a positive danger, till he remembered that the great Nelson was said to have shown fear when driven swiftly in a pony carriage.

Edith was more talkative than usual that evening in the ladies' parlour. She felt elated at the prospect of soon quitting the dreary, big hotel, with its crowded dining-room and its noisy negro waiters, and the uncongenial society of the lady boarders. She told Kate Haverstock where she had been, and the object of her ride, and the incident of the snake. Kate Haverstock turned pale and shuddered.

"I don't think myself a coward by any means," she said, "but I am sure if I had been there I should have

almost died of fright. A moccasin four feet long! And there are no snake-charmers as there are in India."

"Ah!" It was Mrs. Haverstock who spoke, and all eyes were turned upon her, for her voice was deeper and more ominous than usual. "Observe, how the trail of the serpent is over all."

"In a certain sense that is of course true," said Edith. "Yet the snake has perhaps as much right to live as I, and it was only about to satisfy its hunger."

The ladies exclaimed: "You said it was after a nest of young redbirds."

"So it was. But why should it not? You and I do not kill the innocent sheep, but we should be very sorry to do without our mutton. It must be a divinely implanted instinct which teaches a snake to kill and eat that which is fittest for it."

Kate laughed. "To think of your taking the part of a horrid snake! And it might have bitten you!"

"It might; but it did not," said Edith.

"Such an incident ought to supply food for serious reflection," said Mrs. Haverstock.

"I would not go near the place again, if I were you," said Mrs. Lovett.

"But my husband is going to buy the place," said Edith.

There was a chorus of disapproval.

"Why, it is miles away! You will never see a creature."

"You will never get a negro to stay with you."

"If I were in your place, I would not allow my husband to buy it." This was from Mrs. Lovett. Mrs.

Lovett was fond of talking of what she would allow her husband to do. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lovett usually took his own way quietly.

"My husband does not ask to be allowed. When he chooses a thing he says so, and I obey," said Edith.

"Why, I thought he was under your thumb," cried Kate.

"If you begin by knocking under, I can tell you one thing: you will have to go on to the end of the chapter," said Mrs. Lovett.

"I hope I always shall knock under, as you call it."

"But seriously, I should take that snake as a warning," said Mrs. Lovett. "I should consider it an omen that if I went there something would happen to me."

Edith said she did not believe in omens, but Mrs. Lovett reminded her how Joseph was warned in a dream, and Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, and lots of other people. She begged Mrs. Haverstock to confirm her.

Mrs. Haverstock replied in the affirmative. But, here was an opportunity for plain speaking which could not be resisted. "The whole tenor of scripture," she added, "is to the effect that only to the chosen were such warnings vouchsafed, in dreams and visions of the night."

Edith laughed. "Then I am not a chosen one; and the appearance of a moccasin meant nothing at all."

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. BLOSS.

As soon as it was settled beyond dispute that Tregellas had bought land and was going to build a house, some of the Harmonia ladies began to call on Mrs. Tregellas. Among the first was the American wife of the assistant manager, Mrs. Macfarlane. She came on horseback one hot afternoon, attended by a negro boy, who jumped down from behind his mistress and fetched a chair from the hotel verandah for her to step on, while he held the horse's head. As soon as she was inside the corridor, Mrs. Macfarlane took off a long black calico riding-skirt and a thick veil, and presently appeared in the parlour in her visiting costume—a muslin after the latest New York style, with chatelaine and fan hanging from her girdle, high-heeled shoes, and a gay hat, with a pretty delicate-featured face under it. She walked up to Edith with great *aplomb*, introduced herself as Mis' Parthenia Macfarlane, sat down, asked for a glass of iced water, and fanned herself incessantly till she got it; her eyes travelling meanwhile from Edith's attire to Edith's face, and back again. Apparently her scrutiny was favour-

able to Edith, for after she had swallowed her glass of iced water she began to talk, and she talked with little intermission for an hour. Her talk was of her baby, the fashions, and her housekeeping; and Edith, judging from what she said that she must attend a good deal to the kitchen-work, ventured to ask her for a trustworthy receipt for making bread.

Instantly Mrs. Macfarlane's face was wreathed in smiles. "I'll show you the way, and that will be better than pages of receipts. I see you are one that's going to take right hold. That's the sort of woman for this country, and that's the sort I like, too. I reckon we'll be mighty good neighbours."

Edith said she hoped so.

"Mis' Macgregor said she was going to call. She would have called before only she didn't feel sure whether you had fixed to stop here or not. She said she didn't see the use of putting herself about for people who might be off to the other end of the world to-morrow."

"Very true," said Edith.

"You see, she's very smart, very practical. Mr. Macfarlane says she's the smartest woman in the settlement. I believe he thinks she's too smart. Why, if Mr. Macgregor were to disappear to-morrow, she'd run that farm so you wouldn't see any difference. She and you won't live very near each other, to be sure, but I reckon you'll find her as neighbourly as any other neighbour. Has Mr. Tregellas fixed with Mr. Flippoto about getting lumber for his house yet?"

Edith was not quite sure.

"It don't matter," said Mrs. Macfarlane. "If he has not yet, he's bound to do so before long, if he wants his house up this year. Old man Flippoto is the only sawyer in the settlement. Ah, yes, I'll tell Mis' Macgregor you're fixing to build right away, and that will bring her. Now you see if it don't."

The little woman seemed quite inclined to go on with her chat, but a waiter came in at that moment and opened the shutters of a western window for the ladies to see the sunset. As the last rays poured into the darkened room, she jumped up, exclaiming, "My! it's near sundown, and I ought to be home. Come down and see me. Come right in and feel at home, and ask me anything you want to know. I'm an old housekeeper; Mr. Macfarlane is my second husband. But, dear me! I remember well when I was a young housekeeper, and had everything to learn and nobody to teach me." She kissed Edith, repeating, "Come down," at the parlour door and again when she had mounted, and went away, so wrapped up in her thick veil and her black calico riding-skirt that none could have told her age, or even her colour. Edith found out before long that the ladies of the settlement usually rode about to pay friendly visits in such a disguise.

Next Sunday, at church, Mrs. Macfarlane told Mrs. Macgregor that old man Flippoto was getting out lumber for the Tregellases' house, and this brought Mrs. Macgregor to call on Mrs. Tregellas on the Monday, as Mrs. Macfarlane had prophesied. Mrs. Macgregor had put on her Forty-second tartan silk, and her coral orna-

ments, and her best gold chain, to do honour to Edith; but when she saw how plainly Edith was dressed, she wished that she had dressed herself in her second best. When she found that Edith would not converse on housekeeping and the high price of everything in America, but would ask questions about unpractical things, such as birds and plants, she made up her mind that her first visit should be her last. She did not tell Edith in so many words, but she let her understand that it was not to be supposed they would see much of each other. In conversation with Mrs. Macfarlane afterwards, she expressed her contempt for people who came out to America intending to turn farmers.

Mrs. Macfarlane tried to say a good word for Edith. "It was a love match, I have been told; and they are simply devoted to each other."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," said Mrs. Macgregor. "Devotion is not capital. When people intend to farm they should have a capital of so much per acre. That hand-to-mouth business is a mistake, and oftener than not ends in bankruptcy."

"Oh, not if a woman takes hold, as I reckon she will," said Mrs. Macfarlane. But Mrs. Macgregor said taking hold was no good, unless one took hold in the right way, and so had the best of the argument. However, Mrs. Macfarlane chose to follow up her acquaintance with Edith, and was good-natured enough to give her some practical instructions in bread-making, which, in the Harmonia settlement, included the making of yeast.

Edith supposed that in due time she would be called

upon by the clergyman's wife; but Mrs. Macfarlane informed her that the clergyman's wife expected everybody to call upon her.

"You see," she said, in explanation, "Mis' Bloss used to ride around in her coach before the war, and now she has no coach, and she doesn't feel like walking. She says she feels the difference a good deal, though I'm sure I don't see why she should. Lots of ladies have had to walk since the war—haven't they? Of course, when any one has called, she returns the call. I reckon you can do as you like about it."

Edith disclaimed all desire to hurt Mrs. Bloss's feelings.

"Oh, as to feelings!—Of course, I wouldn't want to hurt any one's feelings, but I don't see the sense of a poor minister's wife having so many feelings. I don't know as they have a cent beyond his salary. They pretend they're as poor as Job's turkey, though I hardly believe that."

As a clergyman's daughter, Edith could not acquiesce in Mrs. Macfarlane's sentiments. She declared she would call on Mrs. Bloss without delay. Mrs. Macfarlane laughed when she told her that she was herself a clergyman's daughter.

"Well, I do admire!" she said, and stared long at Edith. "I thought you were a member of the aristocracy. Somebody told me you had been to see the Queen."

Edith confessed that she had made her curtsey to the Queen, but denied that she was a member of the aristocracy. Mrs. Macfarlane opened her eyes and her

mouth wide on hearing this, and declared she felt mixed. However, if Edith was going to call on Mrs. Bloss, she reckoned she might as well go too. But when Edith, after a short interval, announced herself ready, Mrs. Macfarlane exclaimed in deprecation of her toilet.

"Why, I didn't suppose you were going to fix up like that! And I have only my second best on. I declare, you make me feel right shabby."

Edith asked whether she should alter her dress again.

"Lor-rd, no! What an idea! You look ever so sweet. No, Mis' Tregellas, I'm not as selfish as all that, I do assure you. Besides, who cares for Mis' Bloss, any way? Anything is good enough for going to see the minister's wife, I should hope."

Edith knew Mrs. Bloss by sight, a pale, attenuated, white-lipped woman, who fanned herself incessantly throughout the service. She had not seen Mr. Bloss yet; he had been ill and was away for change of air and scene at the Alum Spring House, where he had got himself taken in at half-price because of his profession. During his absence the congregation had had the services of one clergyman and another; and sometimes had had to put up with a truncated service, with only Colonel Haverstock as reader. Mr. Denning had been requested to perform the duty; indeed, Mr. Bloss had almost taken it for granted that he would do so; and that he would moreover perform it without emolument. For, as he said, it was clear that Mr. Denning must have enough to live on without doing any duty. Great surprise had been expressed by Mr. Bloss when Mr.

Denning refused, and a good many among the congregation felt surprised; though they talked less about it than Mr. Bloss did, for the simple reason that they cared less. Mrs. Macfarlane described Mr. Bloss as an English clergyman; not resembling Mr. Denning, on whom his Holy Orders sat as loosely as his old coat, but a clergyman who was a clergyman "all the time."

"I suppose," she said, "that's what a clergyman ought to be like. But I'm glad he is no husband of mine, for I should be mighty tired of him."

The parsonage stood a little beyond the church. It in no wise answered to the idea of an English parsonage; being neither more nor less than a modest frame house set in the midst of a two acre lot which was shut off from the street by a neat paling. This two acre lot was a noticeable feature among all the other street lots. The palings were painted of a pale bluish green, and the parsonage house itself was of the same sickly hue, with doors and shutters of a cheerful chocolate. Only two other houses in the street had their doors and shutters painted at all. These were respectively Mr. Garlick's and the postmaster's house, and one was of a greenish yellow, and the other was of a yellowish green. The rest of the houses showed the natural colour of the pine-wood, except here and there where they were whitewashed. Whether right or wrong from the æsthetic point of view, there could be no doubt that the painted and even the whitewashed houses suggested the idea of permanent occupancy, while the unpainted ones suggested to the beholder that the

dwellers therein were only temporary sojourners: that they were only camping out, so to speak, and were not quite as respectable as if they had intended to stay and help to build up Harmonia.

The parsonage house was set a little way back from the street, and there was room between it and the paling for a grass plot, a flower bed, and possibly a screen of shrubs; but these improvements were still in the future. The house itself was the ordinary frame house with its door in the middle, a window on either side, and three windows above. The back of the house was a duplicate of the front, except that there was a verandah on that side which might one day become a kitchen garden, while on the street side there was only a porch to shelter the front door. If the house looked little like the typical English parsonage, still less did the two acre lot answer to the idea of an English parsonage garden. The first work done to fit it for its destination had been to cut down every tree that stood on it. A young sapling with a whitewashed trunk had been set in front of each window. Old tree trunks stood all over the lot, interspersed with a straggling growth of catnip, horehound, and stramonium; in one corner a patch of grass struggled feebly for existence, and close to the gate there were a number of shallow holes where the parsonage hens had made their dust wallows.

In the porch sat Mrs. Bloss in a rocking-chair, fanning herself. She wore a print dress elaborately trimmed, a white apron with pockets, and a necklace of coloured stones which, had the question been asked,

she would have said were topazes. She sat within a circle of light-coloured husks, and on her lap was a newspaper. She glanced at it occasionally, but seemed more interested in the doings of the people in the street and the antics of her little boy, a pasty faced, discontented looking child in a brown holland suit, with bare legs and feet, who was being carried up and down on the shoulder of a stout, dirty, good-humoured negro boy. The negro appeared untiring in his efforts to amuse the little white master, and the little white master seemed determined not to be amused.

The mistress of the parsonage had looked up the street and down the street, and at length, in despair of seeing anything worth looking at, had risen to enter the house, when she spied Mrs. Tregellas and Mrs. Macfarlane, and waited. As soon as it became plain from their passing the hardware store and the post-office that they were on their way to the parsonage, she stepped down from the porch and went languidly to meet them.

"Well, I declare, Mis' Macfarlane, so you've come to see me at last!" was her greeting; and there ensued a rapid interchange of kisses between the ladies, pending which Edith stood a little aside. But she was presently introduced as "Mis' Tregellas, an English lady about to settle," and then she found herself warmly shaken by the hand and—almost before she knew it—kissed on both cheeks.

With her cotton dress trailing in the dust, Mrs. Bloss led the way to the other side of the house, and called to the negro to bring three chairs to the verandah. Edith sat down and tried to keep her chair steady,

while the other two ladies rocked themselves violently and fanned themselves as if for a wager.

When the first effervescence of Mrs. Bloss's pleasure at seeing Mrs. Macfarlane had passed off, she inquired whether Edith was the lady who had ridden a hundred miles on horseback; and Edith had to explain that though she had ridden a great many miles, they were not nearly a hundred.

"I reckon I must have seen you riding up to the ho-tel, that day," said Mrs. Bloss. "But of co'se you looked different. Everybody looks different on horseback."

"I know that I was tired," said Edith, "and I am sure that I must have looked very dusty."

"I reckon you did. My! you wouldn't get me to ride like that. If Mr. Bloss wanted me to go twenty miles to oblige him, he'd have to get a coach for me: let alone thirty or forty. I wouldn't do it for a dollar a mile. But I've heard that English ladies take a good deal of exercise. I wonder why?"

"They like it," said Edith.

Mrs. Bloss opened her mouth wide and displayed the gold setting of her teeth. "Well, I don't see how they do it, for my part. Now there's nothing like exercise for ruining a woman's complexion; to say nothing of the backache it gives."

Edith explained that in England people did not enjoy good health unless they took exercise.

"Is that so? I've heard Mr. Bloss talk about his mother and sisters who would walk two miles to church and back, but it seems impossible."

Edith said she had often done that in preference to driving, and once more Mrs. Bloss opened her mouth wide and said "My!"

Just then the negro came up with outstretched hand and a request for "goobers."

"Willy wants some," he said.

"Oh me! Tell him I haven't got any," said Mrs. Bloss.

"He seen you eatin' 'em right now," said the negro with a grin.

"What a trouble children are, to be sure!" said Mrs. Bloss. She took a handful of "goobers"—otherwise peanuts—from her pocket, and bade the negro not let Willy eat more than he could help. She gave him a handful for himself, and he retired round the corner with a contented grin. As soon as his back was turned she began to complain to her visitors that her boy Willy, do what she would, was bound to make himself sick with one thing or another. Yesterday it was a pound of candy; to-day it would be peanuts. Diving into her pocket, she produced more peanuts, which she offered to her visitors with the succinct invitation, "Have some." Edith refused, but Mrs. Macfarlane accepted, with the remark that she was as fond of peanuts as any child, and presently the space in front of the American ladies was strewn with light-brown husks.

As soon as Mrs. Bloss had eaten all she wanted, she began to ply Edith with questions about herself, her prospects, and her intentions. How did she like the country? Had Mr. Tregellas made a contract with old Flippoto, or had he fixed to get his lumber from Jones-

ville? There was a lumber merchant lately set up at Jonesville, and Flippoto would not have his own way as to prices any longer. Had she been married long? And was Mr. Tregellas captain in the army or in the navy, or had he run a steamboat? Edith answered these and other queries as succinctly as possible, but felt herself obliged to explain that her husband was not a captain, but a retired lieutenant in the navy. Mrs. Bloss opened her eyes, but failed to see the distinction. "I suppose it comes to pretty much the same thing, anyway," she said. Then turning to Mrs. Macfarlane, she remarked that she was glad to hear that a few people were coming to fill up the place, for Mr. Bloss had been saying before he went away that he must make a change next year, if he were not better supported than he had been so far. As far as she was concerned, she was tired of moving around, and she hoped the congregation would come forward.

Mrs. Macfarlane reddened. "I think we do all we can," she said. "I suppose Mr. Bloss knew when he came, that Harmonia was quite a new place. I dare say that when people have settled and got into the way of making money, they will feel like being more liberal."

"I dare say. I'm not blaming anybody, Mrs. Macfarlane; I'm only telling you what Mr. Bloss said. I don't want to move, and so I tell him all the time. The parsonage is quite small, and I've always been used to have more room to move around in; but there is always something to put up with, no matter where one goes—and so I tell Mr. Bloss."

"Your family is not a very big one," said Mrs. Macfarlane, pointing her fan towards the discontented-looking child, who was just now amusing himself by throwing stones at the negro boy.

Mrs. Bloss turned her head. "Oh, Washy!" she cried, "Washy! Don't let Willy throw rocks at you. Didn't I tell you you must not let him throw rocks at you! You cert'nly do worry me." Then, turning to Mrs. Macfarlane with a sigh, she exclaimed, "I declare those negroes have no more *i*—dea of managing children!—You were remarking that my family wasn't large, but I can tell you it's plenty big enough for me. What was I saying? Oh, yes—the house! Well, you see, Mr. Bloss requires a study, of co'se, and that takes one room. And he's always complaining of that room, saying there's such a glare in it of an afternoon that he can't study. He's tried the dining room, but he don't find that private enough; and I want my chamber to sew in, and I couldn't have my parlour mussed up with his books and papers. He declares that afternoon sun in the study gives him the headache. So there we are! And I don't quite see what I am to do about it."

"Would not an awning shade the room?" said Edith. She had hardly uttered the words when she noticed a look of dismay in Mrs. Macfarlane's good-tempered countenance, and an almost imperceptible raising of the eyebrows.

Mrs. Bloss hesitated for an instant. "An awning! Oh, yes! you mean a window shade. Well, I priced some at the dry goods store—Fuller and Winson's, a

little way down street. I thought if I could get that window fixed, so Mr. Bloss shouldn't grumble any more after he came back, I'd be glad. But the prices! I told Mr. Winson they were far beyond my purse, but he declined to make a reduction, even for a minister's wife. I call that real mean, don't you?"

Mrs. Macfarlane suggested that perhaps Mr. Winson was not an Episcopalian; but Mrs. Bloss said she thought he was, and if he was not, it ought not to make any difference, because there was no church in Harmonia as yet besides the Episcopal church. Then Mrs. Macfarlane suggested that perhaps Mr. Winson was struggling himself to make a living.

"He may be in a hard place, for aught we know at this moment. I should not think Harmonia custom was overwhelming as yet."

"Talk of hard places!" Mrs. Bloss exclaimed. "A minister's wife finds herself in a hard place many and many a time."

"I must say," said Mrs. Macfarlane, "I think that, one way and another, you are all pretty well provided for. Ministers get a percentage off 'most everything they buy, and other folks don't."

"That's so," assented Mrs. Bloss. "But that is only because every one knows that their salary is almost always below what it might be if congregations valued their spiritual privileges at the right figure. La! where should we ministers' wives be, if we didn't get reductions made? I remember when I was at Richmond, when I was going to housekeep, I got a percentage off every yard of sheeting I bought, just by saying I was

going to marry a minister. And, come to think of it, the storekeeper wasn't an Episcopalian—he was a Baptist."

Mrs. Macfarlane laughed, and complimented the minister's wife on her smartness. Mrs. Bloss remonstrated. "I'm not telling you a story, Mis' Macfarlane, so you need not laugh."

"Oh," said Mrs. Macfarlane, "it only occurred to me what a sight it must have been to see your blushes when you told the clerk you were about to marry a minister."

Mrs. Bloss laughed slightly. "It was a fact, and it was just as well to make use of it. Don't you think so? What's the use of being too scared to speak when speaking will help you?"

"That's so," said Mrs. Macfarlane.

"Why," Mrs. Bloss continued, "if I'd been too scared to speak, I know I'd never have been able to furnish my *boodoey*, nor get my nice company dinner set. Mis' Macfarlane, I'd like to show you my company dinner set."

"I'd like mightily to see it," said Mrs. Macfarlane.

But Mrs. Bloss explained that she had left it packed up at her father's when she moved to Harmonia. If she and Mr. Bloss went to live in a city, as she hoped they would one day, the dinner set would come handy; she went on to tell her friend that the dinner set was the best imported, and that it included a set of coffee cups and a dozen individual butters.

"When one has a dinner of co'ses," she said turning to Edith, "one wants a proper dinner set,—don't you think?"

Edith assented, and was glad to receive a mute sign

from Mrs. Macfarlane. As they rose to take leave Mrs. Bloss said she would walk with them as far as the street, and once more she trailed her cotton gown over the waste of catnip and horehound and hen wallows. As she lifted the latch of the gate she inquired whether Mrs. Macfarlane's hens laid any.

"Oh, they are laying some," said Mrs. Macfarlane.

"Well, Mis' Macgregor gave me these, and she said they were first class layers; but they don't lay any."

"Perhaps they are too fat, or too old," said Mrs. Macfarlane with an arch look at Edith.

"Oh! Do you think she would send me old hens? She wouldn't do that, I hope. Any how, they won't lay, and I don't know what I'm to do, for those grocery eggs are not to be depended on."

"They do well enough for puddings or scramble."

"But you see, I expect Mr. Bloss home to-night, and I'm thinking of his breakfast to-morrow. And he can't eat scramble."

"Then he should go without. Did you ever hear the grace before meat, my husband says sometimes?"

"No. What is it?"

"Some hae meat, and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat,
And sae the Lord be thanket."

Mrs. Macfarlane spoke the lines with an excellent imitation of her husband's Scotch accent. Her hearers smiled, and she continued. "That's what I tell my husband now and then, though I'll do him the justice to say that it is mighty seldom he turns up his nose at

good food. Scorning one's victuals is a way the Old Adam has of showing himself, and I suppose Old Adam is bound to peep out once in a while, ain't he?"

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Bloss with resignation. "But with Mr. Bloss it is dyspepsia. That's what he says."

"Men call it dyspepsia; women call it nerves. I call it Old Adam," said Mrs. Macfarlane briskly.

Mrs. Bloss shook her head. "Ah, you don't know what dyspepsia is, when a man is a minister! If I'd known how full of fancies Mr. Bloss was going to be, I'd have married some one else. Why! I've told him so a hundred times!"

"That's rough on Mr. Bloss, eh?" said Mrs. Macfarlane.

"But it's a fact!" Then, holding Mrs. Macfarlane's hand lest she should walk away, Mrs. Bloss told how she might have done so much better had she married a young man who had waited upon her when she was quite a young lady. He had gone away to an obscure place called Scrugg's Crossing, and had set up a little two cent store on the cross road; and the Tallahatchee and the Ohio and Western had connected there, and Scrugg's Crossing from being a place with a cross roads' store and blacksmith's shop, had jumped at one bound into a city of a couple of thousand inhabitants, and her old sweetheart was coining money. It was a chilly place; even the coloured people got the chills. *But*, he was coining money."

"And I might have had that man," she said, tossing her head.

"And then," said Edith gravely, "you would have had your window blind at cost price."

"Why, certainly," said Mrs. Bloss, with a pleased smile at Mrs. Tregellas's appreciation of the situation. Then, recurring to the subject lately under discussion, "Ah! those hens! Mis' Macfarlane, you haven't a few eggs you could spare me, to poach for Mr. Bloss's breakfast to-morrow morning? I declare I wouldn't ask such a thing, but Mr. Bloss is so whimsical about his food. Every thing must be just so."

"I'll see what I can do," said Mrs. Macfarlane. Then the two ladies gave each other a parting embrace, and each said to the other in the same breath, "Come down soon." Mrs. Bloss shook hands with Edith, but did not offer to embrace her; and presently she and Mrs. Macfarlane found themselves in the street. Mrs. Macfarlane walked a few steps at a pace which was unusual to her, and fanned herself with vehemence. They were scarcely out of earshot of the parsonage when she came to a dead stop, shut up her fan with a snap, and addressed Edith.

"Well, I do admire!" she exclaimed. "That woman begs like any tramp. I'm not going to minister to all Mr. Bloss's fads. It is not ten days since I sent her a nice turkey poult. Why doesn't she go and ask Mis' Macgregor for eggs? She knows she wouldn't get them; that's why."

"I know what I am going to do," she said, when they had walked a few steps further. "I am going to get a dozen eggs at the grocery, right now, and I'll send them to her by Jess to-morrow. I dare say they won't

be very fresh; and then she won't ask me for eggs in a hurry."

Mrs. Macfarlane was as good as her word, and went in and bought the eggs then and there.

In their private talks, Edith and her husband had planned to take two sittings in the church, and pay for them what they would pay in a country town at home. But the foregoing dialogue, and Mrs. Macfarlane's resentment of the request of the minister's wife, gave her the impression that possibly if they became members of the congregation, more might be expected of them than they could well afford. She tried to find out from Mrs. Macfarlane how the clergyman's stipend was made up in a place like Harmonia. That there was no endowment of the church there or elsewhere she knew; but she knew no more.

Mrs. Macfarlane informed her that the vestry always had a meeting about Easter time to settle the clergyman's salary. Some people called it stipend, and some called it salary, and some called it wages. It was his pay, anyhow, and she didn't see as it mattered whether it was called wages, as long as the man got it. In the cities there was not generally any difficulty in making up the specified sum, but in the country people often could not be got to come up to the scratch, and then the hat had to go around, and the well-to-do were expected to make up the deficiency. Sometimes they did and sometimes they did not. It depended a good deal on the seasons, and on the popularity of the minister. She could assure Edith of one thing; which was, that no one need pay more than he actually chose to pay.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPERIMENTS.

THE money was paid for the land, the registration had been made in the office of the county clerk, at Robison Courthouse, the Major's fees had been paid for drawing up the deed, and now it only remained to build the house. "Well, my darling," said Tregellas to his wife as he gave her the deed to lock up in his tin box, "you and I are possessors of as nice a little unencumbered property as we could find in the world."

"I suppose the title is quite clear," said Edith.

"Not a doubt. In fact I paid the Major an extra fee to examine the records in the clerk's office and make assurance doubly sure. And as soon as we can get the house up I suppose you will be ready to go in?"

"You need not wait to get the whole house finished," said Edith. "I am ready to go in as soon as there is a single room with a roof to it. We have been a great deal too long at this hotel."

Harry said he would engage labourers the next day if possible, to dig out the cellar. He supposed there must be a cellar. Edith supposed so too. She hoped

it was not going to cost very much. Tregellas consulted the Major, and the Major said that undoubtedly houses were sometimes built without a cellar, still he did not conceive it possible that a lady of culture and refinement should wish to live in one of them. So the labourers were engaged, and Tregellas rode over to his place day after day to keep them at their work. His plan—after taking the opinion of unbiassed persons—was to have the cellar walls built to the height of two feet above the ground, and to place the sills of the house on that. It seemed as if, calculate as closely as he would, the cellar and the foundation walls would be the dearest part of the housebuilding. But those who had themselves built houses told him that it was always so. He was rather appalled to find that the wages of unskilled labour had doubled in the last few months. The Major assured him that it was a "boom, such as was bound to happen sooner or later. By and bye when he had crops to sell he would be glad of a "boom" too.

One day Edith, while seated on the balcony of the hotel saw a straggling procession of ragged negroes passing down the street. There were a few boys, many girls, and some women and children; and they carried on their heads pots and pans and buckets, some of which were covered with bits of cloth; but most were open to the air and to the swarms of flies which kept up easily with the procession, hovering over and settling on the contents of the various vessels, which a closer inspection showed to be blackberries.

Kate Haverstock came out on the balcony and

watched the procession, which straggled on as if it had a definite object somewhere. Kate said she had heard that Mr. Garlick was going to make an experiment with the blackberries of the country. He thought there was no reason why they should not produce a claret of fair quality, which would answer at any rate for the settlers to drink while they were waiting for their young vineyards to grow. And no doubt he had employed the negroes to pick all these blackberries for him.

The procession was almost out of sight when a lame woman came by with a basket on her head. She appeared to be tired, and sat down on the doorstep to rest and look about her. Kate, whose daily complaint was that her energies were rusting, looked at the woman, who was neater in her attire than the other negresses, and had a bright thought.

"If one person is making experiments," she said, "why should not another? Mr. Garlick is experimenting on blackberry wine. I will experiment on blackberry jam. I never made jam in my life, but everything must have a beginning. I'll buy the old woman's blackberries." She ran down stairs and presently returned followed by the old woman.

"I call this a delightful idea," she said. "And so practical! Papa is always talking to me about being practical, so I am sure he will be pleased at my doing this."

Mrs. Bontecoe strolled into the parlour, sank languidly on the sofa, and inquired what foolish thing Kate was going to do next. Kate declared that she was about to begin to be wise. She was going to carry the black-

berries down to the plantation and boil them over her father's fire. He had a fire every afternoon to make himself a cup of tea. And she would steal or borrow a saucepan from the hotel cook.

She had asked the old woman what Mr. Garlick was going to give her for the blackberries, and had been told he had promised two cents a quart. But she had felt sure that, had she to pick blackberries in the sun all day, tearing her clothes and pricking her fingers, she would not feel repaid by receiving two cents a quart.

"I think perhaps I wouldn't mind doing it for four cents, so I will give her four. 'Do as you would be done by' is my maxim. Her name, she says, is Aunt Phœbe. You say there are six quarts in that basket. There is a quarter for you, Aunt Phœbe; that's a cent over."

The old negress, who as soon as she removed the basket from her head had squatted on the floor, took the silver piece with a muttered "Yes'm," but did not move. She stared unwinkingly from one to the other, and Mrs. Bontecoe declared, without in the least lowering her voice, that she believed her to be a witch. "I do wish she were," said Kate, "because then we might have some fun."

"You all is come from 'way up yonder, isn't you?" she demanded, pointing towards the east.

Edith smiled and nodded and told her yes. She sat and looked at them for a minute, and then said, "Whar'll I dump 'em?" indicating the blackberries.

Here was a difficulty. Aunt Phœbe declared herself "right smartly wearied," and refused to carry the basket

a step farther. At last it was arranged that a boy should be hired to carry the fruit and the saucepan as far as the Haverstocks' plantation.

The old woman rose stiffly. Edith held out her hand to help her, and she took it, saying, "I'm 'bleeged to ye, honey." As soon as she was on her legs, she took one more look round, then with "Good-day to you all," left the room and hobbled away slowly.

"Well," said Mrs. Bontecoe to Edith, "I did wonder to see you give your bare hand to that ugly old black woman. I can't pretend to be as strongminded as that."

"Did you not see that she was lame?" said Edith.

Mrs. Bontecoe said she could not see what difference that made, and Edith did not enter into a discussion.

As soon as Kate Haverstock had found a boy to do her errand, she set off accompanied by Edith towards the Colonel's place. The negro followed leisurely, sitting down at frequent intervals, and being always surrounded by a crowd of little woolly heads that sprang no one could say whence, like the flies, and could only be dispersed by the distribution of handfuls of blackberries. Consequently, by the time the ladies reached the Colonel's gate, the boy was out of sight; and by the time he had delivered the saucepan and the basket, the fruit was half gone.

Kate said it did not matter, as it was only an experiment. She sent her father's negro servant to buy sugar, and proposed to Edith to go and see what Mr. Garlick was doing with his blackberry wine.

They found him in a small room on the ground floor;

the only room in the house which had been lathed and plastered. He was dressed in a ragged canvas suit, but received his visitors with urbanity, apparently in complete unconsciousness of the deficiencies of his costume. In one corner of the room stood a big tub into which a negro was pouring mashed blackberries. On a rough deal table by the side of the tub lay a thermometer stained with blackberry juice, and an encyclopedia and a dictionary of arts and sciences. The table and the books were stained; a faint odour of blackberries pervaded the air; while the flies which had followed the procession of fruit-carriers, finding themselves in congenial quarters, filled the air with their buzzing. Kate Haverstock stood and looked round with amusement.

"Well," she said, "look at that nice new floor. I call that exactly like a man."

Mr. Garlick begged the ladies to be seated; but when he looked round he could not find a vacant chair. Every chair was occupied by tin buckets or baskets, and every chair was stained with blackberry juice. He disappeared into a cupboard, whence he presently emerged with a neatly-folded white garment, with which he wiped two chairs dry, and once more begged his visitors to sit.

"I wonder why you don't have all this mess out of doors," said Kate. Mr. Garlick replied that the temperature was more equable within doors. Then he gave an *impromptu* lecture on wine-making, to which both the ladies listened attentively.

"It just occurs to me," said Kate, "that I shall want

a spoon. You must know that I am taking a severely practical turn; I am just going to make blackberry jam. And now I recollect that there is nothing bigger than a teaspoon at my father's place. You appear to have quantities of things lying about, and I dare say you could lend me a tin kitchen spoon for the afternoon.

"Blackberry jam!" said Mr. Garlick in a reflective, dreamy way. Kate said sometimes that he was never thoroughly awake unless he were pursuing a beetle. "A very good jam it is, and a sovereign remedy for sore throat, though it is sneered at as an old wives' remedy. But you will spoil it if you touch it with tin." And he told the girl (waking up as he did so) precisely what chemical changes would take place in the juice of the blackberry if it came into contact with tin. Kate listened and laughed. "I can't take in so much learning," she said. "If you say that tin will turn it a blue-black, that is quite enough for me. What shall I do about it?"

Mr. Garlick said he was sure he had a silver spoon somewhere, and began to look for it. He once more disappeared in the cupboard, and emerged presently looking touzled and vexed, and holding a battered silver spoon in his hand.

"It is the strangest thing!" he began. "This spoon I took with me in an expedition up the river Amazon. I brought it here in fair condition, and now—look at it!"

Kate looked at it. The handle was so bent that a little more would break it from the bowl.

"Well," she said, "if you will use silver spoons in your kitchen, what can you expect?"

But Mr. Garlick, gazing ruefully at the companion of his travels, assured her that he would not treat that spoon so ill as to let it be used in his kitchen. He wrapped it up and put it away, saying he must send it to New York to be mended.

"If I cannot use a tin spoon," said Kate, "what must I do?"

"Use a wooden spoon, to be sure."

Kate said she did not believe that such a thing was to be found at the store. They had not reached such a height of civilization as yet.

Mr. Garlick was by no means at the end of his resources. "In that case," said he, "you must use a stick. But not a pine stick," he added. "If you stir it with a pine stick, your jam will assuredly smell of turpentine."

"I should never have thought of that," said Kate, "but I am willing to take your word for it. Now, may I give you a hint in return?"

Mr. Garlick said he should be delighted to get a hint from Miss Haverstock. "Then," said Kate, "cover that tub with muslin, and keep those flies out. What sort of wine will yours be if you don't manage better than that?"

Mr. Garlick's equanimity was not to be disturbed by school-girl sneers. The fermentation will set everything to rights, he said. And he would not be surprised if the wine turned out a very fair wine.

Kate rose, saying she would believe it when she saw it. Edith supposed she was going, and was shaking hands with Mr. Garlick, when Kate, exclaiming, "What

new thing is this?" went up to a table which stood in one corner of the room.

It had been kept sacred from tin buckets and blackberries, and there was a large sheet of drawing-paper on it, on which were drawn certain lines which appeared to be the front elevation of a building. "That," said Mr. Garlick with animation, "that is the front view of my goat house." And Edith went to look, and asked what he wanted with a goat house. Kate laughed; but then Kate laughed at everything.

Mr. Garlick explained that his goats—which he was importing at considerable expense—were not common, vulgar goats, like the ordinary European goat, or his rocky mountain cousin, which latter would be about as easy to tame as a wild Indian. The goats for which this house was to be built were pure Angoras, and he was importing them in the hope that they might prove of considerable economic value. If the experiment failed, he would be the only one hurt. If it succeeded, it would bring prosperity to Harmonia.

"What do you mean by economic value?" said Kate. "Are you going to send them round from door to door to be milked, as they do at some of the French watering-places?"

Mr. Garlick gazed in benevolent wonder at her ignorance, and asked whether she was aware that upwards of five million pounds of goat hair were imported into England the year before last. Edith inquired whereabouts the animals were to be kept.

There was a piece of hilly, rocky land, he explained, which lay between Harmonia and a tract called Burnt

Forest, and was intersected by the railway. There the goats would have plenty of room to roam. They would neither molest nor be molested.

Kate suggested that they would want something to eat besides rocks; but Mr. Garlick assured her that there were enough bushes and briers on that land to keep twenty goats for a twelvemonth; and his experiment only required a dozen.

Kate asked whether he was going to have a goatherd and dress him in the same costume as the goatherd in *Dinorah*. Mr. Garlick answered imperturbably that his goatherd would be an old Irishman who would appear on the scene in his native costume, which included a battered hat.

The ladies took their departure, promising to go and see the goats when they arrived; and returned to the Colonel's plantation.

On reaching the camping ground where the Colonel had set up his tent, they found the camp fire out, the saucepan half turned over, and the Colonel asleep in his chair under a tree.

Kate ran forward with an exclamation of dismay, which woke him.

"What is it?" he asked with a touch of peevishness. "I am listening, my dear; I am listening. I hear every word you say."

Kate's voice and manner suddenly changed. "The dear old man thinks he is having a curtain lecture," she whispered to Edith. Then, putting her arm round his neck, she said, "Papa, it is only Katie: your good-for-nothing Katie."

"Nothing of the sort. She is a very good child," said the Colonel stoutly. He rubbed his forehead and, catching sight of Mrs. Tregellas, jumped up and began an apology.

Edith, who had noticed how very old and worn the Colonel had looked when his eyes were closed, begged that he would not apologize; and the Colonel then hoped that she would take a cup of tea, and began to make up his fire. It appeared that the negro had taken upon him to put the fruit and the sugar into the saucepan and set it on the fire, and the Colonel, not doubting that this was done by his daughter's order, had sat by to watch the cooking, and had inadvertently fallen asleep.

Katie muttered something uncomplimentary to negroes in general and the Colonel's boy, Phil, in particular. "If I had told him particularly to do that, he would have been sure not to do it," she said. "It is all spoilt now, and may be thrown away." The Colonel acknowledged regretfully that, so far, he had not met with any negro equal to a good Hindoo servant. Kate said they were all brutes, and could only be trained by being caught and tamed when quite young. The Colonel murmured in dissent, "Not quite brutes: not quite," but he said it to himself more than to his daughter. He boiled the kettle gipsy fashion and made the tea himself, and handed the cups round with a benign smile. As he was drinking his own cup he put it down and began to rub his head. "Katie," he said, "I quite forgot to say that your mother was here looking for you."

Kate declared that she was not going to budge till she had finished her tea. She had spent the greater part of the morning in addressing envelopes and putting a green leaflet into each; and she was determined to do no more that day. She was sick of the sight of green leaflets, and she had told her mother so.

The Colonel might have said that, if she was sick of the sight of them, he too was sick of paying for them. But he only said softly, "Katie! Katie!"

"Did mamma say what she wanted?" Kate asked crossly.

"She said Florence was not well. She had been faint, or very near it. She felt the heat so much this afternoon."

Kate stirred her tea with her spoon. "That is a different thing," she said with less acerbity. "I'll go presently, though I don't see what good I can do Florence. If there is anything to be done, mamma ought to know how to do it."

"I think she said Florence had asked for you."

"If Florence would take walks as I do, and as Mrs. Tregellas does, and as every woman does who possesses a grain of sense, instead of lolling on the sofa all day, and complaining of the heat, and keeping her room in darkness, she would be as well as any one of us."

"I am not so sure, my dear. Florence suffers at times. She has to struggle with depression of spirits. You must be gentle with her, Katie, and make allowances."

Kate put down her cup and patted her father on the

back. "I quite expect to see the wings growing out one day," she said. "Dear papa, I always am gentle with Florence, am I not? But I have a little common-sense, and I cannot help seeing that all Florence's suffering is caused by her want of common-sense. And now I'll go. Don't you hurry, Mrs. Tregellas. I know there is nothing really the matter. It is only a case of the tyranny of the weak, that's all. Bye-bye, papa." She ran off, kissing her hand to the Colonel, and Edith followed more slowly.

"She is a dear child," said the Colonel, as he opened the gate for Edith to pass out. "A very dear child, Mrs. Tregellas. Rather impetuous, to be sure, but that will mend. I was impetuous too, once, but time has mended that, though it has not mended me. I hardly know what would become of me without my Katie."

As Edith shook hands, she assured him that she could well believe it. A little way further on she came up with Kate, who had ceased running.

"I could not keep it up," she said. "I am getting 'fat and scant of breath,' like Hamlet, or somebody. I am sure that this do-nothing existence is very bad for me. When we have a house to live in, I intend to train. I don't mean gymnastics, which don't do good to anybody except the person who practises them, but household work, such as sweeping and dusting. I am sure we are costing papa a great deal too much at present. So I intend by and by to save him a house-maid, if I can."

Edith applauded her determination. It was what she intended to do herself, she said.

"Do you know what I like America for?" Kate asked, as they walked on. "I like it because it is such an easy country for getting a divorce."

"What a strange idea!" cried Edith. "And what a horrid one!"

"It is not half so horrid as living a cat-and-dog life."

"But there is no necessity for living a cat-and-dog life," cried Edith. Kate made a grimace. "From all I see, one might suppose there was such a necessity. I look at home and I look abroad, and I draw my conclusions. Come now, honour bright! Confess that love is for a day, and that afterwards people just jog on enduring each other for the rest of their lives. You may be an exception; I think sometimes Mrs. Macfarlane is an exception. But what of the rest?"

"People must have the right kind of love, to begin with," said Edith. "True love sacrifices everything, even itself."

"Oh, if you mean giving up," said Kate, "I've seen plenty of that. But the giving up always seems to me to be on the wrong side."

It was a dangerous theme to pursue, and Edith felt it safest to be silent.

"Yes," Kate concluded, "divorce gives people another chance. You have had bad luck this time; perhaps you will have better luck next time. That is what it really comes to, after all. I do not see why you should be shocked."

"If you do not see, I do not think I can make you see."

"I suppose you think me wanting in moral sense! Well, Mrs. Tregellas, I can tell you one thing. I shall never be divorced."

"I hope not!"

"No, for I do not intend ever to marry. I may flirt; I'd get up a flirtation to-morrow, to pass the time; but as for marrying! No, indeed. You may be a happy exception. How do I know that I am to be a happy exception? As unhappy marriages run in our family, I had better take warning and keep out of danger. I don't want ever to be like Florence, poor wretch."

"Was she very unhappy?" Edith ventured to say.

"When a woman behaves like a balky horse, it is in the nature of things that she should be unhappy. When people have got to pull together, they may just as well pull as back. That game of cross-purposes does not answer in matrimony."

"Nor in anything else," said Edith.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. GARLICK'S EXPERIMENTS.

HARRY went one morning as usual to superintend the digging out of the cellar, and was surprised to find no one there. The pickaxes and shovels and wheelbarrows were lying where they had been dropped the evening before, but not a labourer appeared. He waited about for an hour; and then, supposing that the negroes had taken a holiday to go fishing, as he had been told they would sometimes when they "felt like it," he mounted his horse and rode back to Harmonia.

He found Mr. Garlick and the Colonel seated on the verandah in front of the hotel. Each held a newspaper in his hand, and there was some topic under discussion. Tregellas joined them, and asked if there was any news.

"News enough," said Mr. Garlick. "There is a great labour strike in Pennsylvania, and we fear it may spread down here."

"That will be bad," said Tregellas.

"Very bad," said the Colonel, who had that day only persuaded his wife to agree to the site and plan of the house he wished to put up. "I don't know what we

shall do about it. I, for one, cannot afford to pay such high wages as are being asked even at present."

Mr. Garlick looked vexed. "I did want to have the plastering of my house finished," he said thoughtfully.

"Now, Garlick," said the Colonel, "remember I'm a family man, and don't you pay any fancy price you are asked; because if you do, it will be no use poor fellows like me making a stand."

"I'm one of the poor fellows, too, and my cellar is about half dug out; and my workpeople have taken a holiday to-day, if they have not gone on a strike," said Tregellas.

"It's a strike, sir; you bet your bottom dollar it's a strike," said a newcomer, who pulled a chair towards the front of the verandah and seated himself with his feet tilted up on the railing and his hands in his pockets.

It was Mr. Boniface, the proprietor of the hotel.

"If I was a betting man, I'd lay ten to one we'll have a fuss before all's ended. You see we have had skilled labour brought down here from up that-a-way. These fellers have got their ramifications, and their societies, and their brotherhoods, and they spread themselves every which way. I expect we shall see times."

The landlord's prognostication proved to be true. When Tregellas reached the site of his house next morning, he was met by a deputation, who approached grinning, and addressing him by the appellation of "boss," informed him that they had "concluded" to ask for an advance of wages.

"You agreed to dig out this cellar at the existing

rate of wages," said Tregellas. "I drew up the agreement, and you signed it."

Tregellas, when doing this, had been told it was both unusual and unnecessary; but he had thought it best to be on the safe side.

"Dat ain't nutin, boss," said the spokesman, a negro of the blackest type, who on Sundays was a preacher at the negro church at a settlement some miles from Harmonia called the Quarters. This was a tract of hilly country peopled by negroes from every southern state, and of every shade of colour. There were freed slaves, runaway slaves from *ante bellum* times, one or two escaped convicts, and, if report said truly, the Quarters held within its borders at least one murderer and two or three witches. From this source came mostly the supply of unskilled labour in Harmonia.

Tregellas did not easily take dislikes; but he was sensible from the first of a great dislike to this man, who called himself Ed Wallace. He knew that he never did a stroke of work when his back was turned. He was on the spot in the morning later than any of the gang; he was the first to throw down his pickaxe and declare it was sundown; and, while the rest would not unfrequently take Saturday afternoon as a holiday, he never came on Saturdays at all, alleging that he had to "fix up" for the Sabbath, and "steddy a dicou'se."

"Is it nothing to break your word?" Tregellas asked.

"De Knights o' Labour is stan'in' up for dey all's privileges," said Ed Wallace, "an' we cullud folk is boun' ter stan' up for we all's privileges." He turned to the rest, who had crowded up behind him. "What I

preach to you all las' Sabbath? In de fou'th book ob Generations it was written, 'De labourer is worthy of his hire.'"

"Dat's so, Brother Wallace, dat's so," was the response.

"Well," said Tregellas, who, while the negro was talking had made a rapid calculation how much more he could possibly afford to pay for the job of excavation, "just mention your figure, will you? I don't say I'm going to pay it."

Ed Wallace grinned, and the rest grinned simultaneously. This was the beginning of a concession, they thought.

"Two dollars an' a half for de boss man, an' two an' a quarter for de odders," said Ed Wallace.

"I wish you may get it!" said Tregellas. "You can go, all of you."

There was little attempt at persuasion or expostulation on either side. The negroes had been regularly paid, they had plenty of greenbacks in their pockets, and there was good store of whiskey in the saloons. Even if they had by and by to go to work at reduced wages, there was still this money to spend first. Tregellas gathered together the tools and placed them in a heap under a tree, and then rode across the hills to the house of the nearest settler, Ellacombe, the old west country farmer, to ask him for a corner in which to store the shovels and other gear. The old man who hailed him from afar, inquiring how the work was proceeding, put on a long face when Tregellas told his errand.

"I suppose I ought not to be surprised," Tregellas said. "But when the laziest fellow of the lot demanded two dollars and a half, it did almost take my breath away. Two dollars and a half is ten shillings, the ordinary pay of a lieutenant in the navy!"

The old man shook his head and murmured that it was a bad job. When he came to Harmonia, he said, negro hands were being paid fifty cents per day. Wages had gradually risen up to the present moment, but there was nothing to show for it except an increase in the number of whiskey saloons. From what Ellacombe said Tregellas gathered that he was an ardent advocate of total abstinence. But that was a large question to enter upon, and Tregellas was in no humour to enter upon it now. He rode back to Harmonia and told what had happened to him; and by next morning such of his acquaintances as were employing negro labour to clear or to build, had similar stories to tell; though in no case was the advance demanded so enormous as in the case of Tregellas. Ed Wallace, in advising the squad of excavators to make their demand, had explained to them that the boss was bound to give in, because he had ordered lumber for his house and it would pester him mightily if he could not put it up right away.

Of the employers of labour in general, some were low-spirited at this hindrance to their plans, and some were indignant. Tregellas said as little as he could, and went about chafing secretly at his enforced idleness, and feeling as though a mutiny were going on which he was powerless to quell. Major Forepaw was in a quandary. Some of the new settlers, in disgust at the deadlock,

talked of writing to the *Times* and warning the British public against Harmonia. The time had come for the drawing up of the half-yearly report of the board of directors, and the Major, as of right, was the drawer up of the report. He had not known how to avoid mentioning the strike which, temporarily no doubt, yet for the moment effectually, had arrested the development of the settlement. What he did say was said with a view to minimize the importance of the strike, and it would perhaps have been better had he said nothing. For a choleric Briton seeing the report after it was printed with the sanction of the board, declared it to have been drawn up with intent to mislead; and wrote a statement from a new settler's point of view, which was printed in the *Times* and copied into various provincial journals. Among other hard things this settler said that Harmonia was another "Eden." Now, most Britons know their Dickens. There is not, one may safely affirm, one man in a thousand who has not read *Martin Chuzzlewit*. So that, the word "Eden" as applied to Harmonia by a man who dated his letter from the place, was more conclusive and more damnatory than pages of original vituperation or columns of statistics.

Major Forepaw had studied Dickens to a certain extent. He knew *Pickwick* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, but he had never got as far as the book of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. A candid Harmonia friend lent him a copy of the *Times*, and he puzzled himself greatly over the allusion to Eden, which he had always supposed to be a nice sort of place. Another candid friend lent

him *Martin Chuzzlewit*, but still he was not perfectly enlightened.

"That place Dickens writes about," he said, "was 'way out somewhar on the Mississippi. I allow thar's plenty of chilly places out yonder. But yonder ain't right here. Thar ain't any inundations here, nor any chills. No, sir! I'll offer a hundred dollars to the man who will prove to me that he's got the chills, an' caught 'em here, right in Harmonia settle—ment."

However, the Major, supposing that the *Times* might be a prominent British newspaper, sent his copy of it to the director who had most interest in keeping public British opinion in a healthy state; and presently a letter appeared written by this director and signed by the president of the board, declaring that the labour trouble at Harmonia was at an end, and that it need never have begun but for the endeavour of certain of the settlers to keep down natural competition, and set at naught the law of supply and demand. This, in effect, did more harm than good, as a lie always does, soon or late. The choleric settler who had written first to complain, seized his pen once more, and letters followed fast, until a new topic of interest rose to claim the attention of the British public. Tregellas was not one of those who took part in the controversy, though his case was freely quoted. He said he did not see the use of bringing a private grievance before the public, and the men had as much right to ask for an advance of wages as he had to refuse. As there were no means of keeping them to their contract, the only thing he could do was to wait with what patience he might. He, and many others,

had burned their ships when they came to Harmonia ; but there were many among the latest comers who had not burned their ships, but had come out in advance of their families to spy out the land. These packed up their portmanteaus and shook the dust of Harmonia from their feet. The hotel was emptied as rapidly as it had been filled, and the few remaining guests went about forlornly, looking at the half-finished houses which they had trusted in vain to have ready in a few weeks.

Mr. Garlick was quickly solaced for his annoyance at not getting his house finished by a new experiment which began just now to claim his attention. He had amused himself by making analyses of the soil on his friends' land and his own, and it had appeared to him that all these soils were more or less deficient in phosphates. For this deficiency bone-dust was the obvious remedy. But when he informed his friends of the deficiency in their soil, the answer he received from most of them was that the soil would have to bear the deficiency. They had spent money in bringing their families across the sea ; they had spent money in buying land, and in putting up houses and farm buildings, and now their remaining capital must be husbanded for subsistence till they should receive money from the crops which had been put in. Mr. Garlick, a well-to-do bachelor without responsibility, might experiment, but not they. Perhaps, in a year or two, if his experiment answered, they might feel justified in trying bone-dust ; but not now. Mr. Garlick, who was overflowing with benevolence, bethought him of a way of doubling the value which his experiment would

be to the Harmonia people. He made a rapid calculation of the quantity of meat consumed yearly in Harmonia, and of the amount of bones resulting therefrom, and he thought he would teach Harmonia how to consume its own bones. He proceeded to make a contract with the butcher to hand over to him all the waste of his shop, and he agreed with an old negro to bring him all the bones he could pick up. Among a lot of bones brought one day by the old man was the head of an ox. Knowing from the bleached appearance of it, that it could not have gone through the butcher's hands, Mr. Garlick made inquiries, and learnt that it and the rest of the lot came from the tract of land which he had bought for the grazing of his goats. The bones were thrown into a shed in the back yard, and, while waiting for a supply of sulphuric acid, Mr. Garlick amused himself by reconstructing the skeleton of the ox. After a few days the negro brought another lot of bones, and after a short interval yet another, and with each lot was the head of an ox. When the old man brought the last lot, Mr. Garlick bethought himself of inquiring where he had picked them up, and when the negro declared he had found them all on the tract of land abutting on the Burnt Forest, Mr. Garlick began to smell a rat and went to examine his shed. On finding it empty, he could no longer doubt what trick had been played him. The negro declared that he had had no intention of acting otherwise than "fa'r an' squar'" with the boss, but that a woman down at the Quarters had put a trick on him. He trembled and turned blue as he said it, and Mr.

Garlick was obliged to give him a glass of whiskey to restore his courage. Mr. Garlick did not of course attach any importance to such an absurd story. After a few days, it came out that the darkey had been tricked by some of the young men staying at the hotel, who, on hearing that Mr. Garlick was buying up bones, had secretly abstracted the skeleton of the ox from the shed in his back yard, and had "salted" his land with it. Mr. Garlick did not think the joke quite such a good one as did the perpetrators of it—but that was natural. What vexed him most with regard to the whole matter was that, while he was riding here and there, trying to find out who had been mystifying the old negro, something happened to his blackberry wine. He could only account for its strange appearance on the theory of arrested fermentation, and this was the explanation he gave to people who inquired how the wine was progressing. It did occur to persons who knew the meaning of the phrase that the state of the weather had not been calculated to arrest fermentation, but rather to conduct it to a successful termination; but the only candid friend to pooh-pooh Mr. Garlick's theory was Mrs. Macgregor, who knew other people's business quite as well as she did her own, and who spared neither man, woman, nor child when it suited her humour to speak the truth.

"I'll tell ye precisely what it is," she said. "Your coloured boy has been dipping out some wine from the tub to give to this darkey and that, and he's poured in cold spring water to make up the loss. I wonder ye don't see that from the colour."

"I am sure the boy would not do such a mean thing!" said Mr. Garlick hastily. "Why, he was in rags when I took him in. I have clothed him from head to foot, and I am teaching him to read and write."

"Then I should say that was conclusive. But of course ye need not believe it unless ye choose." And then she related what her own cook had told her: how that she and a "crowd" had been to Mr. Garlick's one evening, and had tasted his wine, and had thought that a keg of sugar dumped in would improve it mightily.

"Well, well," was what Mr. Garlick said. "White servants will pilfer, too; in fact, they will do worse than pilfer. And there is a good deal of human nature in a negro."

"Oh yes," Mrs Macgregor assented; "and so there is in a magpie."

Mr. Garlick did not feel quite so comfortable after this conversation in going away and leaving his house and all it contained in charge of his coloured boy. He began to remember that small articles such as knives and spoons and forks were constantly mislaid, and that towels had a way of getting lost; and he was under a strange impression of having a large quantity of household gear, which on being inquired for article by article, had never even been seen by any eye except his own. But what was a man to do? He could not sit at home and watch over his household stuff. He compromised with himself by locking up his money, and by giving moral lectures on the subject of honesty to his coloured boy, who always listened with a look of piety

that would have been highly gratifying had his employer not suspected it to be put on.

That the wine experiment was for this year a total failure, Mr. Garlick freely confessed. But what was one failure in the history of experiment? What were ninety-nine failures, if the hundredth time turned out right? The sulphuric acid that had been ordered came after a long interval, and Mr. Garlick had the pleasure of guarding against a repetition of the young Englishmen's practical joke by dissolving the skeleton of the ox. If this experiment was a triumphant success in the end, what mattered it to him that there were incidents connected with it which were expensive to his pocket and painful to his skin? Clothes and shoes burnt with sulphuric acid could be replaced, and burnt fingers would heal in time. Mr. Garlick went about with bandaged hands for a fortnight, and quoted Lawes and Gilbert and Liebig to all who had time and patience to listen, and was very happy. And then the agent at Baltimore wrote to say that the goats had arrived, and he was happier still. He had had his goat house finished by paying what wages the carpenters chose to ask; he was waiting to get his house finished, in concession to the wish of the Colonel and others who could not afford to pay fancy wages; and he took care not to mention publicly what he did pay for the finishing of the goat house.

The goats did arrive, and their goatherd; and a little shanty was put up for the goatherd, a lean-to behind the goat house; and for a little while it was the fashion for ladies to ride out by way of Burnt

Forest and see the goats and admire the picturesqueness of the goat house and the view around it. It was not painted yet, and Mr. Garlick always asked each lady what tint she would prefer. He wrote down the preferred tint; and said that as soon as every lady had given her opinion it should be painted to please the majority. Nothing could be more amiable; and this, and the picnic teas which Mr. Garlick gave with the help of the goatherd, made him the most popular man in Harmonia that summer.

The men, to be sure, shook their heads slightly; not at the tea, which was excellent, but at the issue of the experiment, which was doubtful. But, as Garlick could afford to lose money, they agreed that as long as it pleased him it mattered to nobody. When Mr. Garlick mentioned in justification of his outlay the five million pounds of goats' hair imported into England, there were murmurs of "By Jove!" and "You don't say so!" and a very young man said that Garlick 'would be making a pot of money. Mrs. Bontecoe said that it was a very pretty house, and she would not mind living in it herself if it were a little larger. And Kate Haverstock inquired of the goatherd with great affability, how he managed to make the goats enter their house at night.

"Bedad," the goatherd replied, "an' I don't make thim go in. There's wan that goes in an' ates the straw wance in a while that the master had laid down for their bedding; but divil a wan o' thim have I iver made to go in. They roosties on top o' that high roof."

A titter ran round the group of ladies who heard this. But Kate, when she had had her laugh, declared

that Mr. Garlick with his experiment was not one whit more absurd than they were themselves.

"I don't make a single exception," she said. "If I include present company, I include myself. We are all trying, and I dare say we are all trying our best. At any rate we think we shall come out all right, somehow; why, or how, we don't know. Yes, Mrs. Tregellas, even you!—You think you'll come out all right, but what do you know about it?"

"Nothing at all," Edith confessed, "except that love and faith always win in the end." She smiled, but Mrs. Bontecoe turned away with a shudder.

In a remarkably short time, the goats had taken the measure of their owner's estate; while with equal celerity, the goatherd had run up a score at the whiskey shanty at Deercreek. After days of browsing on sassafras and wild azalea and St. John's wort, finding a change of diet desirable, they made raids on the surrounding country. One night the dwellers in Harmonia were roused by the pattering of small feet, first in the street and then in the back yards, where it was customary for citizens to dump their empty biscuit boxes and tomato jars and lobster cans. These proving a dry article of diet, the goats went on exploring, and presently jumped the fence which divided Colonel Haverstock's place from the road. Here all was peaceful and inviting, and they began to browse on the colonel's tea plants. They might have gone on browsing till daylight, had not an inquisitive nanny goat put her head into the colonel's tent, and smelt him all over. Let us draw a veil over Mr. Garlick's distress, when he

learnt that his latest hobby had nearly proved the destruction of the Colonel's tea nursery. He put on his spectacles and went down on his knees to examine the bitten tea plants. He offered to come himself and keep watch by night, and shoot any goat that should infringe on the boundary. He offered to prune the injured plants and water them every evening. However, a thunderstorm came and did the watering, and the tea plants sprouted afresh; and the Colonel, who had gone about with a rueful countenance, resumed his usual mien of gentle resignation.

But Mr. Garlick's sensitive conscience could not be appeased for the damage which had been done to his neighbour's property till he had built a board fence seven feet high to restrain those goats from trespassing. It was in vain that the proprietor of the hotel, and the Major, and the lumber merchant at Jonesville, and even old man Flippoto, told him that he was not legally bound to restrain his goats from trespassing. In that country, they explained, a man was bound, not to keep his own animals in, but to keep his neighbours' animals out. But Mr. Garlick uttered a decided opinion as to the immorality of such a law, and the likelihood of its causing bad blood among neighbours, and had his fence built in his own way. Who shall say what that fence cost him? There were seven miles of it!

But that was only one of Mr. Garlick's experiments; and this is not the place for statistics.

CHAPTER IX.

A HOUSE-RAISING.

ALTHOUGH many of the settlers declared that they would not accede to the demands of the strikers, there were those among them who could ill afford to maintain their families for months at the hotel; and it was to pacify these that the Major at length entered into negotiations with an agent at Chicago to send down a squad of Italian labourers. But these negotiations fell through, and the deadlock remained as it was before.

Perhaps the voice which was loudest in condemnation of the strike was that of sawyer Flippoto. The Major could seek other fields for the employment of his energies, and might find other sheep to tend in case the Harmonia sheep turned their backs on Harmonia. If other resources failed him, he could still discover another spring—iron or sulphur—so as not to raise up a rival near the Alum Spring House. It would be easy for him to write another pamphlet, and obtain the endorsements of ministers of the Gospel, quack doctors, and others. There were plenty to choose from. But there was no such versatility about old Flippoto. It

had been said of him that he was set in his own ways, like a clam, and he was proud that it should be thus said of him. He had been accustomed to declare his readiness to stand or fall by his mill. When work was slack for sawing lumber there was the grist mill to fall back upon, and *vice versâ*. It had seemed to him not long since that his saw-mill would help him to climb to heights which in his younger days he had not dreamed of. He had begun to throw out hints of a school for his boy (much resented by the boy), and had even begun to calculate what might be the cost of a journey to New York for himself. His bank—a deserted blue-bird's nest in the hollow of a tree—was becoming full to overflowing, and he had made a second hiding-place between the rafters and the roof of the grist-mill. And now there seemed to be an end to this prosperity. First came one, and then another, to countermand orders for lumber. It was no use, they said, to have lumber lying on their premises subject to decay and pilfering, as no one could say how long the strike would last. One or two even went so far as to sacrifice the payments they had already made on their quarter sections, and take the next steamer back to England, rather than drop more money in Harmonia. And, as every man who went back might be trusted to keep several from coming, the sawyer had before him the prospect of being forced to return to the modest income of former days, when he barely contrived to eke out a living by combining a grist-mill with his saw-mill.

"It's scandalous," he said to Mr. Garlick, who rode by one day with Tregellas. The mill had been silent

for more than a week. The sawyer's man seeing how things were, had felt that there would never be a better opportunity for taking a holiday, and had accordingly taken one. Old man Flippoto had known better than to say nay when the hired man "concluded" to go a-fishing, but it was not in nature that he should love the hired man the better for the conclusion.

"These coloured people are getting so uppish we'll have to do something," said the sawyer.

"We would all do something, if we could," said Tregellas.

"Ever since the ceety was first laid out," Flippoto continued, "these niggers have been coining money, an' how much are they the better for it? For one whiskey shanty there are three. That's whar they po' niggers' money goes all the time. An' now, they tell me, they're talking about bringin' in an eight hour bill, and New York wages. An' folks is got so trifling, I wouldn't say but it might be lobbied through. I'd say it was scandalous, if 'twas only white men—but niggers!—Oh Lordy!"

"A fair day's work is worth a fair day's wage," said Mr. Garlick. "I don't care whether the workman be black or white."

"I do not agree with you, sir," said Flippoto. "I don't believe in giving coloured people high wages, anyhow. They never ought to be paid more 'n two-thirds whatever white labour may be worth."

Tregellas inquired why.

"Why?" said the old man, facing the questioner squarely with his hands thrust down to the bottom of

his pockets. "Why? Because they can't be trusted to work without a boss man. That's why."

The Englishmen were obliged to confess there was something in that. Tregellas added that, if he could but get a log cabin put up on his place, he believed his wife would be content to live in it. But for all that he could see, a log cabin was as unattainable as a palace in the present state of things.

"Why don't you have a house-raising?" said Flippoto. "That's jes' what I'd do, if I was you. Tell 'ee what, they coloured folks think they are goin' to boss us white folks. Now, I ain't goin' to be bossed by no man, white nor black. If you once give in it's all up with you. Mout as well give in to a hog or a mule. You have a house-raising, sir, an' snap yer fingers at they niggers that's too proud to dig out yer cellar for f'ar wages. I ain't got no use fer folks that's so uppish and hardheaded. Look'ee hyar. I putt up this house with the help of a few neighbours, an' I laid this underpinning myself, every durned rock of it! An' I putt up that chimbly, jes' mud an' sticks, an' it don't smoke no mo'n if 'twas built of rocks. That's twenty year ago; mo'n that, cos 'twas befo' the wah. I allowed that water'ud come mighty handy one day; an' so it has. Yes, sir. I allow that warn't sech a bad move, when me an' the old lady moved up hyar. I didn't putt up the mill myself, cos I was sorter pushed, an' I reckoned it 'ud pay me to hire it done."

Tregellas and Mr. Garlick consulted together apart. Tregellas asked whether such a thing were feasible. Would people care to come and help a stranger such

as he? And how was he to get the logs for his log cabin?

Mr. Garlick could only say that he thought that if Tregellas would put himself into Flippoto's hands, he would come out all right. "You tell him to boss the job," he said, "and he'll do it. He will be all the more ready to exert himself and to get his friends to come and exert themselves, as he has a dislike to negroes, and would never employ them more than he could help, even before the strike."

While Mr. Garlick went to beat up recruits among his acquaintance, and the sawyer among his, Tregellas for his part felt with a new sense of strangeness that the only person of whom he could venture to ask help in this emergency was the west countryman, Ellacombe. Flippoto had assured him that the neighbours in those parts looked on a house-raising as a frolic.

"You have some pies, an' a jug of whiskey, an' some cake, an' some meat an' fried chicken," he said, "an' you'll see if thar ain't a crowd. Pay? You don't pay neighbours! By 'm bye you'll go an' help to a house-raising to one o' their places, may be next year, or year after next. That's how we all does in this country. You all comin' hyar an' payin' fer everything has ruined the country; an' that's about it."

When Tregellas told his wife what he was about to do, Edith said she would go with him and call upon Mrs. Ellacombe. Tregellas had described her as a plain, old-fashioned farmer's wife, and Edith was sure she should find her a pleasanter neighbour than if she were a person with pretensions.

When they reached the Ellacombe's place, the good wife was within, but the good man was in the field. Tregellas went in search of him, while Edith endeavoured to improve Mrs. Ellacombe's acquaintance.

Mrs. Ellacombe was cordial, with less awkwardness than she might have displayed in England had an unknown lady come to call on her. There was a difference, which she felt but did not formulate. Here they were, all strangers in a strange land, and how natural it was to be neighbourly and helpful one to the other!

But when Edith, in answer to the good woman's questioning, told that she had been born almost within sight of Dartmoor, and that her maiden name was de Glanvile, Mrs. Ellacombe knew who she was, and her heart died within her. She had been sitting at her ease, giving a de Glanvile good advice, forsooth, on the management of her dairy and the fattening of young porkers!

"You might ha' knocked me down with a feather," she said to her daughter Mary, a beautiful girl of seventeen, the only one left of a large family. Mary was in the dairy, and Mrs. Ellacombe had made an excuse to leave Edith, to give some necessary household order, so that she might tell Mary to put on her best frock and take out the best teaset for tea.

"Loramassy!" she said, fanning herself with her apron, "what a whirligig of a place this world is, to be sure! Why, Mary, your father's father held land under the de Glanviles. And I remember when your grandmother thought much of it if she was invited to drink

a dish of tea with the housekeeper, and be shown the rooms when the family was away. And what Miss Edith de Glanvile, who will come into the old ladies' property one day, can have come out here for, is more than I can tell."

Mary, who had a habit of blushing for no reason whatever, blushed now, and said perhaps Mrs. Tregellas came out because Mr. Tregellas wished to come. Mrs. Ellacombe did not know how to receive such an explanation. "Tregellas," she said, "Tregellas! What is a Tregellas, I wonder, compared to a de Glanvile? To be sure, they had a terrible come down once, but that is a long time ago, when the old ladies were young. And they always held their heads so high! She is her aunts' heiress, of course, and he ought to have stopped at home with her, I think, instead of bringing her out here." For, to Mrs. Ellacombe's mind, a de Glanvile was a de Glanvile always; just as a royal princess remains royal, even though she may condescend to marry one of the Queen's subjects. When Mrs. Ellacombe heard from Edith's own lips that her abode was to be a log cabin if she could get it—not even a frame house, which would have been lowly enough, but a mere log cabin—she was quite taken aback, and could only murmur, "Dear heart, you don't say so!"

Tregellas had found Mr. Ellacombe, but he was too busy to be talked to. It was not till the sun was low, and tea was ready, that the younger man had an opportunity of explaining what the sawyer had advised him to do, and asking the farmer's help.

When the old man heard of the young couple's resolve to live in a log cabin if they could get one, he slapped his hand on the table till the teacups rang.

"You are the man that will make his way," he cried. "If there is a thing I do hate, it is to see a gentleman give way to them strikers, unless there's a good reason for it. If they had been getting starvation wages, I'd have upheld 'em, sir, against all the county—settlement, I mean. For the Lord's blessing is not on him that oppresseth the poor. But these niggers are like Jeshurun. They've waxed fat, and now they're kicking. Well, sir, there's my team, and there's my man, and there's myself. Only let me know a day or two beforehand, and you shall find us on the spot."

Tregellas said he should be glad to hire the team and the man, as it would greatly expedite matters if Flippoto had a second team to haul the logs (which fortunately for him were lying already cut on the sawyer's place).

Ellacombe did not reject the offer of payment for the team and the hired man. "If you want 'em for more than a day, well and good; at the ordinary rate, you understand. No fancy prices for me, sir! Law bless me! Well!—It doeth my heart good to see a young man of spirit; a man that is a man, so to speak, and not like they daundering, maundering young fellows up to Harmonia. Going to farm, be they!—with their cricket, and their tennis, and their talk about horses and hounds. I've heard 'em going on, when we was staying up to the hotel, before we got this little place built. There's a different

lot out here now; for they come and they go; but they are all tarred with the same brush. To hear 'em, a body would think they were all coming into ten thousand a year, every man jack of 'em. They idle, and they go to Jonesville where there's a gambling saloon, and get cleaned out. And those that don't gamble, they go on drinking sprees. And their fathers at home suppose them to be out here learning farming!—I declare it makes me whisht to see 'em."

"They can't help it, poor dears," said Mrs. Ellacombe, whose invincible good nature beamed from every feature. "They've all been spoilt at home most likely. Maybe they will come out right in the end. Only I wish people would not think, as so many do, that any fool can farm. That's where the mistake is. They all think it is so easy, they need not bother their heads about it."

Tregellas laughed and said he was beginning to think that it took a man of genius to make a good farmer. Mr. Ellacombe mused on that, and said he thought the truth of the matter lay betwixt and between.

"I've read somewhere," he said, "that the boy is father to the man. I do hate to see people take hold of life at the wrong end, so to speak. But I do believe, sir, that you and your good lady have got hold of the right end. There is such a difference in ladies! A farmer's wife should be like the good woman in Proverbs; if the young missus will excuse my making so bold. Why, Mr. Tregellas, you'll prosper, as me and Mrs. Ellacombe have prospered. When I began the

world, sir, I had a family of young sisters to support, owing to losses and one thing and another. And I was forty pound in debt besides, and times were bad. But I laid down one business rule to guide myself by. Says I, I'll never go in debt. I'll cut my coat according to my cloth. And we kept to that—didn't we, Mrs. Ellacombe?"

"That is a rule which I intend to keep," said Edith.

Mrs. Ellacombe looked at her husband. The look was intended as a warning, could the old man have seen it. But he did not see it, and would not have understood it had he seen it. Mary Ellacombe saw it and understood at once what must be her mother's dismay at hearing a de Glanvile, and the husband of a de Glanvile, addressed in such a familiar manner. To think of his telling a de Glanvile, almost in plain words, that she must cut her coat according to her cloth! When Mary saw how her mother's face flushed with vexation, she herself flushed pink with sympathy; and Mrs. Tregellas, seeing the delicate colour spreading over the sensitive face, thought what a shy, pretty young creature was this Devonshire girl!

But old Ellacombe went on, quite unaware of the looks which were passing between his wife and daughter, and the thoughts which were in their minds.

"I am glad to hear you say so, ma'am. Yes, me and Mrs. Ellacombe have prospered. We've had our troubles, like everybody else; but we've prospered. And you'll prosper, never fear. The Lord's blessing will be upon you, as it always is on them that follow the paths of uprightness."

Mary looked at Mrs. Tregellas, wondering whether she would not be offended now. For here was a Methodist exhorting Church people! But Mrs. Tregellas only smiled sweetly, and asked Mrs. Ellacombe for a little more cream in her tea.

After Tregellas and his wife were gone, Mrs. Ellacombe took her husband to task good-humouredly for his having spoken so freely to such gentlefolks.

"I was on pins and needles the whole time," she said, "and I know my face was on fire like if I'd been in the kitchen of a hot afternoon making raspberry jam. And I looked at you—I looked at you twice and you would not see me! I declare I began to feel flustered at last."

"Well," said the farmer, "I did see you look at me funny once. But I thought you meant that the teapot was running low, or you were short of tea, or something, and I wasn't to ask for another cup. So I refrained."

"Well, well, if you didn't know!—She didn't seem offended, I'll say that for her. But perhaps 'twas manners, her not showing that she'd taken offence. Oh, to think of your speaking so free to a de Glanvile!"

"Betsy," said the old man, "why should I be afraid to speak the truth, even before kings and princes? What if Mrs. Tregellas is a de Glanvile? If she is a sensible lady—as I think she is from the little I've seen—she will not be offended at plain truth from a plain man. I tell 'ee what, Betsy; if the de Glanviles had been accustomed to hear plain truth, and had had

the common-sense to profit by it if they heard it, maybe they wouldn't have got so low as they did get in my father's time. I've heard him say that the de Glanvile ladies always seemed to have more sense—in the way of common-sense—than the men. No, I'm not ashamed of anything I've said, and I ain't going to be, either."

Mr. Garlick had not supposed that he should meet with any difficulty in getting helpers for Tregellas's house-raising. He was popular among the young men: as popular, that is, as a man can be who has certain definite aims in life, and disapproves distinctly of drinking, gambling, and loafing, as pursued by very many of the young fellows who called themselves colonists. Mr. Garlick was good-natured, eccentric, in the sense of taking his own methods rather than following those set down in the code of Mrs. Grundy, and liberal to the extent of lending a five-pound note to a fellow that was hard up, and appearing only to remember having lent it when the borrower tendered payment. Though he was long past desiring to be considered a young man, Mr. Garlick had cherished the idea that he was liked among young men. He thought that they would not mind obliging him upon occasion, if he did not ask too hard a thing; and when he put it to them that, as colonists, they were bound to help one another, and that here was a colonist wanting help, he was a little hurt when they all, "with one consent, began to make excuse."

One said he had letters of importance to write.

One had an engagement that could not be put off.

He was going to Jonesville with some fellows who were getting up a football match.

One, who had been tasting samples of beer for a few days in the Harmonia saloon, excused himself on the score of being disabled from the heat.

A fourth said it was his turn to superintend the old darky who had the contract for rolling and watering the tennis-court and the cricket-ground.

A fifth twisted his pale moustache and said he should be particularly busy on his own place on the day of the house-raising.

One of the company of gilded youth wondered audibly why the dickens a man came out there if he was too poor to pay workpeople to build his house. It was very well to talk of being colonists and helping each other, but, by Jove! when a beggarly half-pay lieutenant had the cheek to expect gentlemen to work like dock labourers, by Jove!—

Mr. Garlick heard this pleasant speech, but as it was not said directly to him, he made no answer to it, but lit his pipe and smoked a while in silence.

"Half-pay lieutenant, is he?" said a young man who spoke with a sleepy drawl. His name was Raine—the Honourable William Raine—and he was distinguished in the company of gilded youth for being always in a state of dilapidation. "Poor, is he? Well, so am I. I shouldn't wonder if I were the poorer of the two. But we can't all be tailors' sons, can we, Croker?"

There was a smile of satisfaction on most faces when the Honourable William Raine delivered this home-thrust.

"Well," said Mr. Garlick, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, "I'm sorry none of you can come. There will be the jolliest little picnic; as many young ladies as Mrs. Tregellas can muster for tea-time, and beer and cider on tap, I've no doubt, for thirsty labourers."

"A picnic!" they all exclaimed together. "You never said a word about any picnic, old man."

"Oh, the picnic, you understand, is Mrs. Tregellas's affair. Tregellas is concerned in getting as many men as he can to lend a hand; Mrs. Tregellas will concern herself in feeding the said men."

"I'll slope down some time during the day, perhaps," said one who had been among the first to excuse himself.

Mr. Garlick told him bluntly that he would not be wanted. His name was Huish, an obtuse, good-looking fellow, not ill-meaning, and not more selfish than his bringing up had made him.

Raine might be careless in his attire, and rough in his ways. He might—and did—often go on sprees, and owe for his board and his washing, but he was a gentleman at heart; and as soon as he had decided slowly within himself that it would be gentlemanly to help Tregellas he went to him and offered his services. Perhaps he might have been slower about it but for Croker's sneer at the lieutenant's poverty. He thought that such as Croker ought to be put down, and this was the only way of putting him down which occurred to him. He let it be known that he thought it would be "the thing" to go to Tregellas's house-raising, and on the day it

came off he, in fact, rode down to the place, accompanied by Huish and one or two more.

But they were late. It is astonishing how difficult it becomes for persons who once give way to habits of idleness to be in time for anything! They rode up just in time to see the last log raised. Mr. Garlick, who had been there even before Mr. and Mrs. Tregellas, greeted them sarcastically.

Raine looked at the skeleton of the log cabin and said, by Jove! he wished he had come sooner. But the rest thought they had timed their coming remarkably well.

"And do you mean to say," Raine inquired, "that all this has been put up since this morning, by main force, without a lift or a crane or anything of the kind?"

"Even so," said Mr. Garlick. "What should we not have done had you been here!"

"Well—I wish I had," said Raine. "I didn't know it was going to be so confoundedly early. You said something about a picnic,—don't you know."

"Oh, I see, it was all my fault," said Mr. Garlick good-humouredly.

Raine, seeing a group of ladies a little way off, made his way towards them. He knew them all except Mrs. Ellacombe and her daughter, to whom he was introduced; and then he and Huish and the rest were bidden by Mrs. Tregellas to make a fire and boil the kettle for tea, gipsy fashion.

There was very little stiffness among the young people when they wandered off to pick up sticks and pine cones to light the fire. Even in Europe, when

people go to picnics they leave a good deal of their stiffness at home. And here, in this delightful New World, where chaperons are unknown and young men and maidens pair off for the afternoon or for life, as suits their fancy, what was there to prevent them all from having what our American cousins call a "good time!"

Mrs. Tregellas, hearing the innocent shouting and laughter in the woods, found herself wishing that she were there to join in, instead of keeping company with a middle-aged motherly person like Mrs. Ellacombe. Mrs. Macfarlane said that she had a great mind to join them; before she did so, however, they came back, the men with their pockets full of chips and saplings in their hands, and Kate Haverstock and Mary Ellacombe with their pockethandkerchiefs full of pine cones. Mary emptied her handkerchief on the ground near where the kettle stood, and then went and sat down beside her mother, while Kate, assisted by the young men, lit the fire and hung the kettle over it. While this was being done Mrs. Ellacombe observed that her husband was beckoning to them.

"Perhaps he wants his coat," she said. "Take it to him, Mary. 'Tis cooler now than it was two hours ago."

Mary took the coat and helped her father put it on. Then she returned and spoke to Mrs. Tregellas with many blushes.

"Father would like to speak a word, if you please, Mrs. Tregellas."

"To speak a word!" said Edith wondering.

"If you don't mind. I don't think he will be long. I told him they were boiling the kettle for tea."

Edith rose,—wondering a little why Mary should be so shy and embarrassed,—and advanced towards the group of men, of whom Ellacombe was one, standing near the hollow square of logs. Mrs. Macfarlane followed Edith; Mrs. Ellacombe and Mary lagged behind, and there was no wonder in their faces, but much perplexity.

"Oh, Mary," said Mrs. Ellacombe almost in tears, "if father is going to exhort, I don't know what I shall do. Gentlefolks and Church people ain't used to such ways. If we were all joined Methodys it would be quite another thing. But as it is — "

"Instant in season and out of season," said Mary softly. "That is what dear father is."

"Why should he let his good be evil spoken of?" said Mrs. Ellacombe with just a trace of sharpness. "He will only be misunderstood. I ought to know what the de Glanviles are like, for if we didn't live on their land—my family, I mean,—I've heard enough about them from them that did. Oh dear! And Mrs. Tregellas will be our nearest neighbour, and I do hate having neighbours that don't feel friendly, and — "

"There is father signing to us to make haste," said Mary. "Come, mother dear, and don't 'ee mind so much. I don't believe any one could take offence at father's speaking."

Mr. Ellacombe was standing a little apart from the group of workers who stood or sat at ease, every man's

face turned to catch the evening breeze which was beginning to steal gently up the valley.

"My friends," said Mr. Ellacombe when his wife and daughter stood beside him, "let us join in prayer for a blessing on this house." As he spoke he fell on his knees, and his wife and daughter knelt with him.

For an instant Edith was startled, and looked at her husband. She feared that he would think the old man was taking an unwarrantable liberty. For about a minute she thought so herself. But Tregellas, who had grasped the situation at once, was standing bareheaded, with folded arms and his quarter-deck demeanour.

After all, Edith considered, the old man meant well, and he was a Methodist, which explained even this, the wildest kind of devotional impromptu. Yet, why should not a house be consecrated as well as a church or a cemetery? Edith remembered how at Nice she had seen the parish priest go round at Easter time, and bless not only each house, but each room in each house. To be sure, she would have preferred a few words spoken calmly out of a book by a properly ordained clergyman to this fervid, impetuous appeal, as if God in heaven were so far off or so unmindful of His creatures that only loud and reiterated supplication could reach His ear. But of the old Methodist's sincerity there could not be a doubt. It was apparent in every gesture, in every tone of his voice. Edith knelt; and, seeing her kneel, Kate Haverstock and Mrs. Macfarlane followed her example, while the young men, though they stood a little way off, had the grace (or the manners) to stand bareheaded like Tregellas.

"Except the Lord build the house, their labour is in vain that build it."

Such was the theme. That the dwellers in that humble abode might be blest in their incomings and their outgoings; that the children which might be born to them might partake of the blessing; that each soul belonging to that household, from its head to its lowliest member, might be found among the righteous at the last day: such was the burden of the old man's prayer. There was iteration; there was uncouth language; there was sometimes an ungrammatical phrase; and it could not be said that the old man's voice was always delicately modulated. But his heart was in his prayer. To borrow from his own phraseology, he wrestled on behalf of this young and loving pair who had left friends and country far away, and were beginning the world in which he had had half a century of trial and experience. How fain would he have invoked unbroken prosperity on their heads! How fain would he have asked that they might receive children at the Lord's hand and never give them back weeping! But those things were hidden, and what was he that he should meddle with the Lord in His dealings? He could only entreat that they might be blest for time and for eternity. Had he not prospered? Had he not been blest? And yet all his darlings were gone save one, and no son remained to be the prop of his old age. He asked not for this thing nor for that thing, but only that the Lord might send His blessing on the dwellers in this house, now and always.

Long before the old man's prayer was at an end

Edith was weeping. Even Tregellas felt an unwonted moisture at his eyes. He had been slightly ruffled once during the morning because Mr. Ellacombe, on seeing the beer and cider brought for the workers' refreshment, had taken occasion to lift up his voice in favour of total abstinence. Tregellas had not chosen to enter on a discussion; he had merely said that he left the same liberty to others that he claimed himself, and he had taken care that the old man should have enough of the beverage which he, perhaps ostentatiously, preferred—pure spring water. But, knowing how intolerant are the upholders of the temperance and every other cause, he had not expected a prayer at the end of the day's work breathing nothing but loving-kindness. He was touched as well as surprised. He had been quite as much aware as Mr. Ellacombe himself could have been, of the great gulf of class which lay between them. But now as he listened to these fervent outpourings, all on behalf of him and his, with never a word of denunciation because of his being that thing abhorred of total abstinence advocates, a temperate man, he swore to himself that the old man should have his friendship if he chose to accept it.

From the place where Raine stood he could see Mary Ellacombe as she knelt listening to her father's prayer. When he first became aware of what was going on, he assumed an attitude of attention from politeness only, hoping silently that the "old duffer" would make haste and be done with his ranting. But, when he raised his eyes and saw the rapt face of the kneeling girl, he changed his opinion of the old man's tediousness, and

wished that the prayer might be as long again. Before Mary had arisen from her knees, with her face full of emotion and a tear trembling on her eyelashes, he was deeply in love, for the first time in his life.

When the prayer was over, Mrs. Tregellas went up to Mrs. Ellacombe and took her hand. "You must thank Mr. Ellacombe for me," she said sweetly. "Tell him I do feel his kindness."

"Oh, ma'am," said Mrs. Ellacombe, wiping her eyes, "I didn't know how you might take it, and I did feel anxious for a minute. Mr. Ellacombe, you see, has been a joined Methody nearly all his life, and a class-leader for years and years. But, oh! I was fearful you might be offended, being Church folk and all; and it made me so nervous! People don't always understand Mr. Ellacombe."

"How could I be offended," said Edith, "when a good man was asking a blessing for me and mine? I could only pray that he might be heard."

They rode home together in the moonlight. Raine tried to keep close to Mary, and once when her horse stumbled over a loose stone he jumped down and took her bridle, and would have led the animal the rest of the way had she permitted him.

Mary was at a loss to understand such excessive civility.

Until this afternoon she had only seen the young man once or twice in the street; once, alas! she had seen him staggering out of the beer saloon.

It was on that occasion that she had taken particular notice of him. She had been seated in the gig, holding

the reins, while her mother was speaking to the postmaster in his store. Raine had passed by with coat unbrushed, with dirty boots, *minus* collar and necktie, looking as dirty and disreputable as a tramp. Mrs. Ellacombe, standing in the doorway of the store, had seen him too, and had exchanged a pitying glance with her daughter at the sadness of the spectacle. And that was the Honourable William Raine, the postmaster had said. Not much of the honourable in him to look at, Mrs. Ellacombe had remarked. And perhaps he had a mother praying for him at home.

Mary's natural shyness was not likely to be lessened by civilities from such an one. She had kept close to Kate Haverstock while they were all picking up sticks and fir cones in the wood, and had answered the young man's offer of help with a murmured negative. That he was an Honourable was nothing to her. She could only remember that the last time she had seen him he had been staggering out of the beer saloon in full daylight.

Raine had not been much in the way of making himself agreeable to ladies. He had not had very much chance of meeting with young women belonging to his own class, since his father for many years had felt himself unable to entertain in his own house, and could not afford his younger sons the means of going where they would be entertained as became their station. There are, of course, crowds of perfectly respectable and well-to-do women who would look with contempt at the person who should venture to hint that they did not belong to the very best society, but who cannot prevent

themselves from feeling honoured by entertaining an Honourable, and are without the tact to conceal that feeling. In such society as this a young man is apt to develop all the snobbism which may be lying latent in him; and the Honourable William Raine had not proved himself an exception to the rule.

He was completely taken aback by Mary's short answers. He was determined to talk, and she was equally determined to be silent. She rode on, wishing sincerely that her father, who was talking so earnestly with Tregellas, would stay behind with her instead of leaving her to be escorted by a young man of this sort. She felt relieved when the cavalcade came to a halt on the high road, and each little group turned on its way homeward. She thought it almost an impertinence when Raine expressed himself delighted at having made her acquaintance, and offered his hand. "He might have waited till I offered to shake hands," thought Mary; and though she did give her hand, she punished his bad manners by abstaining from the slightest answering pressure. And what was he saying to her father and mother? Might he come down and see them sometimes? She felt quite angry at her father's cheery invitation to come whenever he liked. But she noticed that her mother said nothing.

Raine finished his ride by the side of Mrs. Tregellas. He was not diffident or cast down as yet; he was not one whit oppressed by the sense of his own demerits. With men of his temperament and position that phase has to come later if it come at all. He was already planning how to build a house for this beau-

tiful, shy girl, who would doubtless return his love. There had been better than she who had been ready to return him smile for smile! The only thing that troubled him was the thought of his small allowance, but even that did not trouble him very much. His father had grumbled ever since he could remember, about the money his sons cost him, and Raine had come to think that the grumbling was a set formula. Supposing his allowance were doubled or trebled, there could not be more grumbling.

"I think a fellow might be uncommonly jolly in a little house like what you are putting up," he said to Mrs. Tregellas.

She laughed as she replied that she intended to be uncommonly jolly. She was, in truth, so glad at the thought that here was the little home, actually begun, where she and her husband could live in accordance with their means, that she could have sung for joy. Raine was silent for a moment. He was considering how to frame his next question.

"I suppose a fellow could manage on a small income, living in a little house like that?"

"Oh yes," said Edith readily.

"Do you think Tregellas would mind telling me how much such a place would cost to put up?"

"I am sure he would not mind. But you cannot be thinking seriously of setting up for yourself in a log cabin?"

"I am thinking very seriously about it," said Raine.

Edith said her husband would be going daily to help on the rest of the work until the place was so far

finished that they could live in it. He would breakfast quite early, and be away all day. Raine would very likely be able to find him disengaged in the evening; but, if he really was contemplating a log cabin for himself, would it not be a good plan for him to accompany her husband some morning, and see precisely how the work was carried on? She spoke half in jest, for she did not suppose he would do such a thing. There was no opportunity for his saying a word to her husband then, for Harry was deep in talk with Mr. Garlick all the way to Harmonia, and good-nights were briefly exchanged when they reached the hotel. Tregellas had been up since dawn, and had worked faithfully under old Flippoto's direction for the best part of the day. But Edith was astonished when she saw Raine enter the dining-room next morning, join her husband in a seven o'clock breakfast, and ride off with him afterwards. She was still more astonished, when she rode down herself in the middle of the day with her husband's dinner in a tin bucket, to find Raine there with his coat off, and his hands all over clay which was being puddled to daub between the interstices. When he saw her he washed his hands in a great hurry and put on his coat. Tregellas came up and asked her, *sotto voce*, whether there was plenty in the dinner bucket. "For," said he, "that fellow has been actually working all the morning, and has not been making such a mess of it as one might suppose. I thought at first when he said he had come to help, that he would be an awful nuisance, but I have not found him so at all."

There was plenty of dinner in the bucket, and they sat down and shared it. Raine said when he had finished, that he thought working for one's dinner was rather a good idea, and getting up so early wasn't half bad when a fellow had an object.

CHAPTER X.

THE ELLACOMBE HOUSEHOLD.

As soon as Raine had copied out fair Tregellas's plan and estimate of the expense of building that lowly thing—a log cabin—he sat down and wrote what he felt to be a very convincing letter to his father. When that was done, he looked over his clothes, picked out from half-a-dozen coats the least dilapidated one, put on a clean paper collar, and went down to see Mary. He argued that, as she was so very shy, he must not expect her to say much for the first time or two; he must treat her as he would a fawn, and let her get accustomed to his presence. But after all, his paper collar was put on in vain. Mary did not show herself, and as he was not asked to stay to tea, he had no alternative but to go as soon as he had made a somewhat protracted call on Mr. Ellacombe. Mrs. Ellacombe had ventured a hint to her husband that the young man was not such as they would have been willing to have at the house were he in their own station of life; and in consequence Mr. Ellacombe had put a restraint on his hospitable instincts. But although he could not say

that his wife was wrong, neither was he sure that she was right.

In cautioning her husband Mrs. Ellacombe had refrained from uttering Mary's name, though Mary was in her mind. She did not want to bring Mary's name into the discussion, even with her husband whom she trusted. That the Honourable William Raine should fall honestly in love with her daughter was a thing beyond her imagination. She had noticed that he had ridden close to Mary when they were all going home after the house-raising, though he might easily have placed himself close to some other lady; and she had supposed him to be attracted by the prettiest face in the company—for Mary, though she had neither the dash of Kate Haverstock, nor the style of Mrs. Tregellas, nor the airy sauciness of Mrs. Macfarlane, had a beauty and sweetness of her own, which, in the mother's eye, far outshone all the graces of the other ladies. Mr. Raine had been struck by this beauty and sweetness and, being an idle young man, was going to amuse himself with a flirtation. But Mrs. Ellacombe was determined there should be no flirtation.

Once again young Raine made his appearance at the Ellacombes' place, and this time he came so early that the family dinner was only just over. Mrs. Ellacombe, who was helping Cleopatra the black servant to clear the table, saw him from the window, and told her husband with a touch of sharpness, who it was approaching the house. Mr. Ellacombe who had just lit his afternoon pipe, got up and went out to meet him, wondering a little why he should come again so soon.

"Mr. Raine again!" said Mary. "I hope he will not stop long, because I want to dust all the books in the parlour bookcase." And with that Mary went into the kitchen to superintend the dish-washing.

Mr. Ellacombe and his visitor entered the parlour, and for a few minutes there was an animated conversation. Then the master of the house went out and was seen to go toward the stable. Mrs. Ellacombe hesitated for a moment. She did not wish to be over civil, but on the other hand it did not seem the right thing to leave a visitor alone while she and Mary were both in the house.

"It would not look vitty," she said to herself in west country phrase. So, with just one look in the glass to see whether her cap was straight, she went in.

Raine had heard a footstep outside the door—had he had his wits about him he would have known that Mary Ellacombe moved with no such heavy step as that—but he was hoping so much that it might be Mary!—he jumped up, and found himself face to face with Mary's mother. He felt disappointed, but tried not to show it.

Mrs. Ellacombe seated herself and tried to talk, but there was a restraint in her manner that went beyond the natural shyness of a countrified woman. Raine found her as difficult to converse with as her daughter had been. He ventured to ask after Miss Ellacombe's health, and to express a hope that she had not taken cold the other night. Mrs. Ellacombe answered that Mary had her health tolerably well, and had caught no cold. Raine said he was glad to hear it, and then there was

an awkward pause, during which Mrs. Ellacombe wondered what on earth she should talk about, and why Mr. Ellacombe did not make haste; and Raine wondered if he was again going to be so unlucky as not to see Mary.

Mrs. Ellacombe could talk fast enough when she felt that she had a congenial listener. Had Mrs. Macfarlane been there, or even Mrs. Tregellas, there would have been no difficulty in finding topics of conversation. But what was she to say to a young man like this young man, who was not a farmer, who belonged to no trade or profession, who was an idler, and a drunkard, and a lord's son? Would such as he care to hear that she had trouble in keeping the ants out of her store-room? Or that two black snakes had been seen lapping a pan of cream in the dairy that morning? Even to grave persons like Mr. Garlick or Mr. Denning, she would hardly have ventured to descant on such a humble theme as the drawbacks to dairy work in this new country. And they were gentlemen that were gentlemen! But what was she to say to an ill-behaved, drinking sprig like this? She had not even the resource of the Dartmoor hunting as a topic for small talk, as she would have had in her old home. She looked shyly at Mr. Raine's hat, and then at Mr. Raine, and wished earnestly that her husband would come in. She observed however that the hat which lay on the table was well brushed, if not new, and that the owner of the hat was well brushed and had had his hair lately cut, and wore a semblance of clean linen. And then she thought of the time when she had seen him staggering from the saloon, hatless and disreputable.

Thus it will be seen that, between her embarrassment at having to entertain a visitor of a higher rank than her own, and her dislike to this visitor in particular, Mrs. Ellacombe was as uncomfortable as she well could be. At last, in sheer desperation, she blurted out an inquiry whether Mr. Raine had dined.

Raine said he had. "They have dinner going on from one to three, and to-day I dined with the first batch. Seems odd to feed so early in the day, doesn't it? But I dare say one would soon get used to it."

"It does not seem odd to me, sir," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "But then I am a farmer's daughter, and have been used to early hours all my life."

"Don't you find it an awful nuisance?" said Raine.

"No, sir. Why should I? I have often wished the day was longer for all I have to do."

"I suppose you are very energetic?"

"I don't know about that, sir. When there is plenty to do, I like to do it."

"I dare say it is rather nice having a regular occupation!"

Mrs. Ellacombe looked at him, wondering whether he knew what nonsense he was talking. "I don't know about its being nice. I should be miserable, myself, if I were idle. But there are a good many idlers, and they don't seem to mind it. I believe you are an idler yourself, Mr. Raine; but it don't seem to disagree with you, so far."

"Well—yes, I suppose you would call me an idler," said Raine. "But I am thinking seriously of—of settling. I have been looking about me, because I don't

want to make a mistake. It would be awfully idiotic to buy a place and build a house, and then find out the place didn't suit you, and you had to go somewhere else. There are some people who have done that, and I don't wish to follow their example."

"Of course," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"That was why I came down this afternoon. I wanted Mr. Ellacombe's unbiassed opinion about some land midway between Harmonia and the station—dee-po, as the natives call it. Major Forepaw recommends it strongly, of course, and that is just what makes me feel doubtful; because he never sold an acre yet that he did not recommend strongly."

"I suppose a land agent can't help himself," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "But farming is an anxious business, sir, and I wonder to see so many take it up."

"Do you call it an anxious business? To be sure, in England they are always complaining of the rain, but they are a jolly-looking set to look at, nevertheless."

Mrs. Ellacombe remarked that they had not been feeling jolly of late years. Raine, who had been keeping his eye on the window, now saw Mr. Ellacombe leading his horse to the fence. He jumped up, glad to be at the end of his *tête-à-tête*, and said, "Would not Miss Ellacombe like a ride this afternoon? There is a jolly breeze springing up."

"I think my daughter will be busy this afternoon, I thank you, sir," said Mrs. Ellacombe, in her stiffest manner.

Mr. Ellacombe came in apologising for the delay. His best bridle had been mislaid, and the old one had

to be mended before he could use it. He bade Mrs. Ellacombe write down on the slate that a new lock was wanted for the harness cupboard. He remembered well having hung the bridle up himself, but it was gone, and of course no one had seen it or knew anything about it. He went out, preceded by Raine, and only turned his head at the door to say that they should be back by tea time.

They rode off, and Mrs. Ellacombe stood watching them in the doorway for a moment, feeling angry with her husband for his want of caution. Her Mr. Ellacombe was as good as gold, there was no denying that; but he had no gumption! As if he could not have ridden out and ridden back with this young man, without asking him to tea! He should know—he must know—what manner of young man this was, without her being obliged to give him hints. The idea of his being asked to tea in that off-hand, friendly manner, as if he were a nice married gentleman like Mr. Tregellas, instead of being a drunkard and a lord's son!

But Mary could not be hidden away altogether from such profane gazers. Even Mrs. Ellacombe would not have liked to do that. The man would be there, and he must eat and drink of the best in the house; and Mary must hand him tea and cake. Mrs. Ellacombe went into the kitchen and put on her apron, and turned up her sleeves. She must make tea cakes, and she stinted neither eggs nor butter in the making; in justice to herself, not out of liking for the guest.

When tea time came, Mary did her duty as became her at her father's table; but not a word did she

vouchsafe the visitor, except in reply to a direct question. Mrs. Ellacombe observed this, and admired her child's behaviour, and thought Mary was behaving very "vittily" indeed. Had she been a bystander in another sphere of life, it need hardly be said that she would have pitied the shyness of the country bred girl, and wondered perhaps whether it was really natural, or just a little put on. Raine tried in vain to make head against it, and at last gave up and sat silent. Mary retired with the tea things; and Mrs. Ellacombe, clearing her throat, began an apology.

"I am sorry," she began, and she turned redder and redder as she spoke, "that I can't ask you to make use of something—brandy, or gin, or whatever it is you're in the habit of taking. But my husband is a teetotaller, as perhaps you know; and he don't allow anything to be kept in the house."

"Oh," said Raine, who had been at first mystified by the west country phrase, "I don't want anything, thanks. Really, do you know, I think one can do very well without 'nips.' I haven't touched a thing for ever so long, and I find I can get on just as well without."

Mrs. Ellacombe looked at him with pity. "Ever so long" with him meant a few weeks, perhaps. And after that period of abstinence he would have a drinking bout which might surpass all others in disgrace and degradation. She knew how it was in her own class, and she could not believe that a gentleman drunk was a whit less degraded than a drunken farmer. Nay, the fall was greater, in that he stood higher in the world's estimation. And to hear the poor soul

talk, as if it were a discovery that he could live without daily drams!

Mr. Ellacombe could not let pass such a good opportunity of expounding his temperance principles. He was far from copying the apologetic tone of his wife. How should he apologise for living up to his principles? Should he not rather glory in the fact that for thirty years and more—as long, that is to say, as he had been a householder—the soul-destroying poison had not passed his threshold? He felt himself an example to the great, as well as to the lowly, in that he had lived more than half a century, and was now hale and had all his wits about him, and had not during all that time allowed a drop of alcohol to pass his lips. Who could say? Might it not be possible that the young man had been divinely guided to his humble dwelling, so that he might have the joy of snatching him as a brand from the burning?

"Give total abstinence a fair trial, sir," he said, "and you will find you always get on better without 'nips,' than with them." Then he quoted—he had it all at his fingers' ends—statistics and medical authorities and Biblical texts. And Raine listened, suppressing as best he could his desire to yawn, and wondering how such a tiresome old man could have such a charming daughter.

"Oh, yes," he said, when at length there was a pause. "I dare say one can get along without drinking anything. Of course a man is a fool to make a beast of himself. I don't suppose I have ever taken more than was good for me; except once or twice, perhaps." It was a

qualified admission, but he was too much of a gentleman to tell a downright lie about anything; and he knew that he had exceeded more than once or twice in Harmonia, and more than once or twice elsewhere; though he did not know that Mary Ellacombe had ever witnessed his disgrace.

"Sir," said the old man, "could you say that you were not a murderer because you had only killed a man once or twice?"

Raine laughed, though Mr. Ellacombe's tones were very solemn.

"Oh, come now, that is entirely too far-fetched," he said pleasantly.

Mrs. Ellacombe looked grave. She was not quite sure whether Raine were laughing at her husband or not. Mr. Ellacombe would have had a rejoinder ready, but his daughter's entrance interrupted him. One of the workpeople wished to see him, she said. The old man left the room with an apology to his guest, and to Raine's delight Mary fetched a lamp, lit it, and sat down by the table with a bit of fancy work in her hand.

Raine moved his chair a little nearer—he would have liked to set it nearer still, but did not venture—and tried once more to make her talk. Was it not awfully dull living in the country so far from neighbours, and with nothing going on? he asked. Mary, with her beautiful eyes fixed on her work, murmured that she was never dull.

"But," asked Raine, astonished, "how do you help being dull? It is not as if there were anything going

on. There never is. I used to think my father's place dull, in summer especially. But, by Jove, it was liveliness itself compared to this place!"

Mary lifted her head and looked at him, while a smile of amusement hovered round her mouth. "I suppose there is nothing going on for you, but for me there is something going on every day of the year."

"Oh, I suppose you are one of the busy ones, like Mrs. Ellacombe."

"Of course I am! I help mother," said Mary with a little laugh. But she checked herself immediately, and hoped it had not been noticed.

Raine thought he was getting on much better. She had smiled; she had looked at him, and now she had laughed. He had thought her lovely when she knelt with her head bent in prayer, but he decided quickly that when she looked in his face and laughed she was lovelier still.

"But," said he, looking attentively at her—for her face was bent once more over her work—"don't you ever have any fun? Don't you play croquet, or tennis?"

"I used to play croquet at home," said Mary.

"I belong to the tennis club, of course, but I think croquet is nicer for warm weather."

"Perhaps it is."

"We could make up a game quite easily for you any afternoon. A member is allowed to take in a visitor, and I should be delighted——"

"Thank you," said Mary coldly, "but it would not be worth while."

"Don't you really care about it?"

"I don't think I do." She blushed a little as she spoke. She would have cared to join in a game had any one but Raine asked her. But she disliked receiving civilities from one like Raine.

"Mrs. Tregellas plays, but not very often," said Raine, more for the sake of saying something than for the value of the observation. "You will have her for a neighbour before very long, I should say."

"Yes, and I am so glad." Again Mary's face was wreathed with smiles. "I never saw any one that I liked so much from the first. I am going to try if I cannot find a short cut to get to her house, over the hills. It is more than four miles by the road."

Raine resolved that he, too, would find out that short cut. He remarked that no doubt Mrs. Tregellas was very nice. And her husband was very good-natured in lending him plans and estimates and so forth, and did not seem to mind what trouble he took to explain things. That was nice, too; because explaining was what most fellows hated. Then he told a story of a tutor he had had when he was a little boy, who boxed his ears with the book and called him "dunce," whenever he asked for an explanation.

They laughed at this, and then Mary said with a wise nod, that she believed Mrs. Tregellas had made the plans, if Mr. Tregellas had made the estimates. "That is, for the house they were going to build when the strike began. I dare say they will build it later. I thought it very pretty."

"She must be awfully clever," said Raine.

"She is exactly my idea of what a real lady should be," said Mary with energy.

"I see that I should do well to cultivate Mrs. Tregellas," said Raine. "But I have a higher *beau-ideal* than that."

"But that is quite impossible!" cried Mary. And then she blushed and felt that she had said too much. Mr. Raine might think her impertinent. Her shyness returned, and again she was silent and occupied with her work.

Mrs. Ellacombe thought that here was a good opportunity to mention that Mrs. Tregellas was a de Glanvile; and she did so at some length.

"Oh,—ah,—yes, she is very nice," said Raine. "Awfully nice, I should say, when you come to know her. There are some awfully old families scattered here and there. And they are so stuck up!" he continued laughing. "Always look at you as if they were going to ask who was your grandfather. Rather hard on a fellow like me, who does not boast of a great many grandfathers,—don't you think so?"

Raine's gentility only dated back three generations. The first Lord Raine was a law lord of some eminence. The title had descended, but the brains had dwindled. The present Lord Raine was a poor man, with a large family of sons and daughters who were of all degrees of dulness.

Mrs. Ellacombe was all agape at this speech. A lord was a lord, she supposed, and she could not understand that a gentleman, if he were proud of being a gentleman, should not be still prouder of being a lord.

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Ellacombe. And there was a murmur of astonishment even from shy Mary.

"My father was only the second viscount," said Raine, much amused at Mrs. Ellacombe's surprise that he should speak evil of dignities. "I think sometimes that the title is worse than a white elephant. I am sure I am worse off for its being in the family. I am only the fourth son, so I haven't the ghost of a chance. There won't be a crumb for me."

"Riches and titles are snares, we are told," said Mrs. Ellacombe cautiously.

"Are they? I don't care about the title, but I wish I had the riches. How is a fellow to get on without something to start with? Lots of money is jolly, let me tell you."

"They say great men have always been poor," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"Well," said Raine, "I never should be great, because I haven't got it in me; so there's just one chance of my being rich some day or other."

Mary was wondering a little at this jaunty way of talking; she was not quite sure whether she liked it or not. There did not seem to be any harm in it, but might it not come within the category of idle words? Before Raine could start a new topic Mr. Ellacombe returned; and then Raine thought he had better be going. He had made Mary laugh once or twice, and she had looked at him. The timid fawn was getting tamer, and he would go now, before the old man could begin any more of his temperance platitudes. But Mr. Ellacombe had his fancies, and one fancy was that no

guest who had eaten the evening meal at his table should be suffered to depart before the evening prayer. When therefore Raine rose and said he must be going, he was asked—civilly, but, as it seemed to him, almost peremptorily—to resume his seat, and Mary, at a sign from her father, brought a book from the side-table and laid it before him. Then the black servant was called in and seated herself with a pleasant grin, subsiding into preternatural gravity at a look from Mrs. Ellacombe.

The old man looked round the group—his wife, his child, his hired servant, and the stranger within his gate—and made this preamble: "I always like to begin and finish the day with prayer, and a word out of the good book. In the morning it oils the wheels for the day's work, and saves a lot of creaking and groaning. At night it helps smooth things down—tempers and the like—that have got ruffled in the course of the day."

"Quite so," said Raine, who supposed that the observation was addressed to him.

What the chapter was about, and whether it were long or short, Raine could not have told. There sat Mary with her hands folded in her lap, and her beautiful eyes cast down, the embodiment of spiritual meditation. When they all knelt to listen to the long extempore prayer, Raine contrived to turn his chair a little so that he could still see Mary. Her face was hidden in her hands, but once she drew them away and looked upward with a rapt, fervent gaze, which made her in Raine's sight lovelier than ever. He could

have grovelled on the ground at her feet for one of those rapt glances. Had they been alone, he would not have been able to refrain from a rash word which would have told his love, even though it had procured his instant banishment. At any other time he would have been silently amused at the uncouthness of the old man's phraseology, at the frequent archaisms—which were partly Biblical, partly drawn from Nonconformist literature. Above all, he would have been amused at the groans of assent from black Cleopatra in the corner, who, being a "church member" of the negro church at the Quarters, imagined herself to be exercising a right as well as performing a duty when she accentuated the loudest and longest supplications of the "boss" by a groan, or an abrupt ejaculation.

Raine, as an unprejudiced bystander, thought it all very odd, but gave the old man credit for right meaning. Mary's father was already a privileged person. But what was this? There was a slight stir; Mrs. Ellacombe had felt tired, and had slightly changed her position. Raine hoped the prayer was finished; but no, the old man had started a fresh topic. He was praying for him! Raine said to himself that that was coming it rather too strong. Then he began to listen. A man can hardly help listening when he is being prayed for loudly to his face. This was surely the oddest old man that ever lived, he thought. And how very odd that he should have such a daughter. It was odd altogether, and for a minute or so Raine felt quite embarrassed at hearing his own name and a sort of outlined description of himself! To be sure, the Queen

is prayed for every time she goes to church, but then she is accustomed to it, and knows that it is the proper thing for the clergyman to do. There is no element of unexpectedness in the prayer for the Queen's Majesty, such as there was in the prayer of old Ellacombe for the Honourable William Raine.

Venturing another look at Mary, Raine observed a new look on her face, and was puzzled to know what it could mean.

Mary, in fact, was wondering whether Mr. Raine, being what he was, would be in any way benefited by her father's prayer. It was certain that he wanted praying for, and that he would be very unlikely to pray for himself. She, as well as Mrs. Ellacombe, had felt a little taken aback, when Mr. Ellacombe had detained the young man, instead of letting him depart before the evening devotions. It was not as though Mr. Raine were a neighbour such as they had at home. All the neighbours knew her father's ways and respected them, even though they might not be Methodists. At home in Devonshire they had never had visitors, except in their own way of life. Had Mr. Ellacombe been a hunting farmer, it might have been otherwise; but it had always been his aim to keep himself unspotted from the world, and it had seemed to him that so much worldliness was inseparable from hunting, that no Christian man could ever be a hunting man. So he had kept himself aloof—though he dearly loved a good horse—and the hunting world had passed him by. Yet it was never forgotten by Mrs. Ellacombe and Mary, that Mary's grandfather Ellacombe had once entertained

the lord lieutenant of the county for a night, when he was overtaken by a fog, and his horse had fallen lame. Mary remembered, and wondered whether Mr. Raine would turn out like that lord lieutenant — a hard drinker and a hard swearer. No such gentry had been seen at the Ellacombes' house for many a long year. What belated huntsman would stop at a house where only tea and cocoa and long prayers were to be had, when another of a more jovial sort was within reach? Their most honoured guests were the local preacher and the parish doctor; and they and such as they, liked to be prayed for by name, and would have felt that something was wrong had there been an omission; even as the Queen might feel should the officiating clergyman lose his head, and inadvertently and without malice aforethought, omit the prayer for the Queen's Majesty; or, equally *sans* malice, pray for Queen Anne, who is dead.

Poor Mary sighed, and Raine wondered why. The girl was tired with kneeling, as she often was. She knew how good her father was. Often she said to herself that he was the very best man in the world. But he did forget now and then that long kneeling was fatiguing. And the sigh was one of perplexity too. Mary knew that her mother heartily wished Mr. Raine away, as heartily as she did herself. He was one of those who "sat in the seat of the scornful." He would go away and make fun of her dear father's Methodism. Yet who wanted the prayers of the righteous more than he? Not the parish doctor at her old home; nor the local preacher, who had been a shining light in the circuit

for years longer than Mary's life. Not even men such as Mr. Garlick and Mr. Denning, who walked uprightly, and seemed to be God-fearing, though both belonged to a Church which cherished a grave error as one of its tenets. Not such as these, who walked uprightly according to their lights; but poor souls who were groping in darkness, or Gallios, such as this young man, who cared not.

Now Mary had all the "gumption" which her father lacked. It had doubtless descended to her from her mother, who possessed it in so great a degree. Old Ellacombe would have told them that a great deal of their gumption was nothing but worldiness, but they never ventured to discuss the subject with him. What he said was usually taken for gospel, and put into practice as far as they could. For the mother and daughter never pretended to have attained to the spiritual heights on which the head of the household stood. They could not, in their secret souls, believe that it was as good to be instant out of season as in season. Whereas Mr. Ellacombe, in his secret soul, believed that it was better to be instant out of season than in season.

But the longest prayer must have an end. The "amen" was pronounced at last, and echoed softly by Mrs. Ellacombe and Mary, and aggressively by the dusky Cleopatra; and then they all stood up to say good-bye and good-night. When Raine shook hands with Mary, she had resumed her first shy demeanour, and only had two frigid finger tips to offer him. Now, she was thinking, he would go back to Harmonia and

raise a laugh among all the gentlemen staying at the hotel by making fun of her dear, good father, who was worth a million of such as he. She hoped he would never come again. So did Mrs. Ellacombe. But in truth Raine harboured no such evil intention. The fact that Mr. Ellacombe was Mary's father would have prevented him, and no one in Harmonia was a bit the wiser for his having spent that evening with the Ellacombes. And it was observed by Mrs. Lovett and other keen-sighted ladies that, whereas the Honourable William Raine had been, to put it mildly, a bit of a rowdy, he was beginning to turn over a new leaf. There were no more sprees to be talked of, and he left off wearing coats that were dirty and torn. *Ergo*, he must be in love. But with whom they no more guessed than did Mary herself. Mrs. Macfarlane, to be sure, had the fact been told her, would have asked, why not? But Mrs. Lovett, who had a high sense of what an honourable owed to himself and his family, could not have supposed that Mr. Raine should desire to marry one who was not a lady. Mrs. Lovett did not call persons ladies who got up at four o'clock on churning mornings. Mary Ellacombe was a good sort of girl, no doubt, who belonged to good, respectable, vulgar people. What uplifting of hands and eyes would there have been, had Mrs. Lovett known that the Honourable William Raine considered her a very vulgar, good sort of person!

CHAPTER XI.

A YELLOW GIRL.

At last the log cabin was finished and Edith was able to take possession of her home. It was out in the wilds the ladies assured her, quite removed from the outskirts of Harmonia civilization; but she smiled at their forebodings and went to it with a heart full of happiness. It was rough, undeniably rough. The kitchen was a log cabin on a still smaller scale, with a large intervening space between it and the principal structure. Edith had wished all the offices to be under one roof, but the sawyer had explained to her that in this country the kitchen and the negroes' cabins were always set down far apart from each other, and as far from the master's house as possible; because of the negroes' carelessness and the consequently ever present risk of fire.

"It used to be bad enough befo' the wah," he said; "but then, if a darky did let the fire out he got tied up an' whipped, an' that made the others keerful. Now you dasn't do anything to make 'em mind, an' you're at the mercy of the triflingest. Fifty yards too far away

for the kitchen? If 'twas my kitchen, an' a coloured cook in it, a hundred yards would be none too much to please me," quoth Flippoto.

Gradually, as the negroes' money vanished, they returned by ones and twos and besought employment. Though at first inclined to scorn the wages offered, they soon came to terms, finding that no one in Harmonia would pay more than Tregellas did. A rough enclosure was made, the space inside was dotted gradually with small erections, such as a smoke house for the meat, a corn-crib for the corn, a chicken house for the chickens; a space was allotted to a kitchen garden, and another space in front of the log cabin was laid out by Edith (on paper), as a lawn with flower beds. When a second structure was put up close to the log cabin, and Tregellas had put a rough verandah round and roofed it himself, so that at any time of the day his wife could sit in the shade, Edith felt herself happier than before, if that were possible.

It was a picnic existence, so far. She had solved the servant question by having none. How pleasant it was to do things for her husband! To be sure, sometimes the bread failed in an unaccountable manner to rise, and sometimes it rose too much; which was equally unaccountable. But with good will on both sides, and a happy knack of making the best of everything, the days sped away without a cloud on the husband's brow, or the shadow of care to dim the light in the wife's eyes.

One morning as Edith sat at work on the verandah, she became aware that a group was approaching the

house. The group presently resolved itself into Mrs. Macfarlane on horseback carrying her baby, and a black boy on another horse with her eldest child, Frankie, in front of him. The black boy also carried a big basket, and various bags and packages hung from Mrs. Macfarlane's pommel. She handed the baby to Edith and dismounted.

"Well!" she said, after she had kissed Edith and divested herself of her thick veil and her riding skirt. "Well, I sent a girl down yesterday that I thought you might try. Did she come?" Edith shook her head. "No! Oh those darkies! I thought I would come down and see. I might have known she was going to fool me, when she vowed she would be here by sun up, 'cep' death or sickness.' However, we'll try again. I should think you were 'most worn out by this time. I thought it would do no harm to bring a basket along." She bade the negro put the basket on the dining table and began to unpack it.

"Here's a cake, and here's something for Mr. Tregellas. Shortbread, because all Scotchmen love shortbread."

Edith smiled. "Mr. Tregellas is a Cornishman."

"Cornish? Well, I did think he was Scotch. It don't matter, anyhow, England and Scotland are so close together. Then, here's chicken pie, and some fruit pies, and some light bread. And how does your bread-making get on?"

Edith recounted her difficulties and said as she admired the shape and texture of Mrs. Macfarlane's loaf, that she hardly hoped ever to be able to make

such bread as that. The bread-making was the only part of her housekeeping which ever lay heavy on her mind. She confided to Mrs. Macfarlane how disgraced she had felt one day when her bread was very bad, and her husband had not complained or made a wry face at it. She thought no woman deserved the name of "lady" who was incapable of making a good loaf.

Mrs. Macfarlane made light of her difficulties. Every one must begin some time, and a loaf or two of soggy bread wasn't going to kill any husband in this world. However, as she was there she might as well make up a loaf as not, and that would help the morrow's housekeeping. Without more ado she took off her rings and her bracelets and tucked up her sleeves. Before she could begin however her boy Jess came to say that the baby was asleep. She bade him lay the child on the verandah in the shade; then a thought struck her, and she asked Edith whether there were any snakes about. When she heard that a snake had been found in Edith's room the day before she gave a little shriek, and bade the boy look round and see if there were any more. Edith suggested one of the hammocks (Tregellas had slung up a couple) and there the baby was laid, while Jess was ordered to take Frankie away and play with him, and see he did not go where he would be likely to step on a snake. The boy, a good natured, stupid-looking creature with rolling eyes and widely everted mouth, promised vigilance and went off holding the little fellow's hand.

"I don't know what I'd do without Jess," Mrs. Macfarlane remarked. "When Frankie is sick he

won't let any one carry him about except Jess. And he washes and dresses baby, and amuses him when I'm busy. Oh, he's a mighty good boy is Jess."

When the dough was set to rise, Mrs. Macfarlane resumed her ornaments, shook out her dress, and sat down with the air of one who had dismissed domestic cares from her mind. She took from her work-bag an elaborate piece of embroidery and began working busily at it, telling Edith it was her baby's christening frock.

"Don't you English people ever use rocking chairs?" she asked. For she had looked round before seating herself hoping to see a rocking chair, and had seen none; nor had Edith appeared conscious of the want of one.

Edith replied that for herself she preferred a firm seat, but she would have one for the sake of her American friends.

"Oh, when you are tired and worried, a rocking-chair is such a comfort!" Mrs. Macfarlane exclaimed. "You laugh! My dear woman, do you suppose you are never going to be tired and worried? It's early days with you yet. But 'bide a wee,' as my husband says."

Edith said she preferred to sit quite still when she was tired.

"Then you don't know the meaning of 'tired' nor 'worried' either."

"I know I cannot expect my life to be perpetual sunshine," said Edith; "but I am determined never to meet trouble half way."

"You are right. No need to meet it half way. I'm sure sometimes I feel so nervous that the children's voices go through my head. It is then that I find my rocking chair such a comfort. Mr. Macfarlane lays it all to my drinking green tea; but he only says that because he prefers black himself. But I feel just splendid to-day. I told Mr. Macfarlane when I woke I felt so good I was bound to go visiting somewhere."

Mrs. Macfarlane worked industriously for a while, then nodded, woke up with a start, and apologised. She had been up since four o'clock, she said, in order to get things straightened out before leaving home. Then, more wide awake than ever, she asked Edith when she intended to have her bee.

Edith said she had had no intention of having a bee. She thought that she would be able to fit up her little house herself, with her husband's help on rainy days.

"What's that you are working at now?" said Mrs. Macfarlane.

Edith explained that she was making window blinds. The negroes had a habit of coming to the window and poking their heads in to make their wants known, instead of going to the door and knocking. And her husband disliked being disturbed in that way as much as she did.

Mrs. Macfarlane supposed English people were mighty particular. She didn't see how one was to expect manners from field hands, anyhow.

"But, oh my!—Fancy the dreariness of running up curtains and sewing sheets and all, without a soul to

talk to. If 'twas me, I'd feel like sitting down and having a good cry."

Edith looked up with a smile. Under the roof of the verandah where there was a beam which rested on the wall of the house, a pair of house wrens were building a nest for their second brood. They had been disturbed in their old dwelling, and had come to the new house to try their luck, though it was late in the season for building anew.

"Those birds are not dreary," said Edith, "and why should I be?"

Mrs. Macfarlane looked up and laughed. The hen bird, with vehement chattering and flapping of wings, had just pushed down the twigs and dry grass brought by her mate. "She thinks he don't know much about the business," said Mrs. Macfarlane. Then she laid down her work and bade Edith admire it. She reckoned that by the time the little frock was finished, her baby would be able to walk up to the font. Some people didn't have their babies christened at all; but she wasn't that way of thinking, and babies did look so sweet in their christening robes. Mr. Macfarlane didn't mind one way or the other, so she was going to have her baby christened just as soon as she had got the frock ready. Then she looked at the wrens, and remarked that they were "mussing" up the floor, and if she were Edith she would drive them away. Edith said it gave her pleasure to have them there, on which Mrs. Macfarlane laughed and said she supposed she was poetical.

"I never wrote a line of poetry in my life," said Edith.

"Is that so?" Then Mrs. Macfarlane told what reams of poetry she had written when she was a girl; about who was at the commencement exercises, and who got the first prize; and what the girls wore, and the 'bokays' the fellows brought them.

"Ah! what good times I used to have, to be sure!—But the poetry was knocked out of me many a year ago. I'm not given to be sentimental; but let me tell you, I felt right sorry to think how all the poetry is going to get knocked out of you, so young and trusting as you are."

"I cannot keep young," said Edith, "but I shall always keep trusting."

"Just hear her!" said Mrs. Macfarlane, casting her eyes up to the ceiling. "It all depends upon the man, my dear. It all depends upon the man!"

"I think it depends quite as much upon the woman!"

"Ah, well,—that's what you think. Did you ever have anything to do with a real bad man?"

"Never!" cried Edith,

"Then you don't know how bad a man can be. Well, Mis' Tregellas, I declare to you it's something to be thankful for if you don't know. Often have I wished it had pleased the Lord to keep me ignorant of the amount of wickedness a man is capable of, when he gives his mind to it. I am not talking of Mr. Macfarlane, you understand."

"I hope not!" said Edith.

"No, indeed! If every man were like Mr. Macfarlane!—You know he's my second. My first was—well,

I'd rather not say what he was. I'd never have had the courage to try again, only Mr. Macfarlane took a fancy to Frankie, and I thought if I was taken there would be somebody to keep the child from starving till he could do for himself. And he took him and has treated him like his own ever since. Nobody could tell any difference. Ah, Mr. Macfarlane is a good man, let me tell you." Mrs. Macfarlane's manner had been just as animated when alluding to her former troubles as when she was telling of the poetry she wrote when a schoolgirl. But now a tear trembled and fell down her cheek, and she had to wipe it away, though as she did so she laughed.

She might, perhaps, have gone on descanting on the good qualities of her present husband; but she was interrupted by Jess, who came helter-skelter round the corner, followed by Frankie.

"Oh, Mis' Parthenia!"

"Now, what did I tell you? Didn't I tell you I would not have you making a fuss right here? Go along! Do you hear me?"

"Yes'm. Thar's a lady want to see you. She, I mean," the boy added, nodding at Edith.

"Where is she?" said Edith.

"Right in thar," said he, with a nod in the direction of the kitchen.

Edith rose and went towards the kitchen, followed by Mrs. Macfarlane, Frankie and Jess bringing up the rear.

On a chair in the middle of the room sat a negro girl, dressed in a fashionable but dilapidated costume

of white muslin. Before seating herself she had taken some pains to spread out her skirts to their fullest extent, and she was still admiring them. Her large flat feet were bare and muddy. On her head was a straw hat trimmed profusely with dirty pink gauze and flowers. In one hand she held a blue parasol, in the other a large green fan which she waved vigorously. Her attire was completed by a pair of white cotton gloves. As soon as the ladies entered the kitchen she gave each of them a patronizing nod, and went on fanning herself.

Mrs. Macfarlane said *sotto voce*, "Did you ever!"

There was a pause, during which Edith considered what she should say. Judging by Mrs. Macfarlane's muttered exclamation that the girl's behaviour was abnormal, even for a negro, she asked who she was, and what she wanted.

"I heerd you want t'hire a cook, an' I come to hire."

"I do want to hire a cook, but I could not think of hiring you," said Edith.

"I kin cook. I knows how ter cook real splendid," said the girl, sitting upright and closing her fan with a snap.

"You may know how to cook, but you have no manners," said Edith. She walked away followed by Mrs. Macfarlane.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" said that lady.

"If that is the way the negroes behave, I will be my own maid of all work for the rest of my life."

"This one is rather a bad specimen, I confess. But

of course the young ones are not like the old time servants, and never will be. They think they show their independence by being as rude as they dare to their employers. But, my dear creature, how you talk !— Your own maid of all work, indeed !— "

" That would be less annoyance than having such a creature about me."

" May I speak to the girl ?—Oh, here she comes. She is too yellow to please me, and that's the truth. Those yellow girls are generally trash."

The girl kept looking over her shoulder as she walked, to see whether her train were properly spread behind. These retrospective glances made her progress slow.

" Hi," Jess exclaimed. " Hi ! see dat snake comin' ? He cotch you, sho, ef you don' run. He wrop roun yo' leg an' mash you."

" You hush yo' mouf, nigger, else I kill you," the girl retorted with great dignity.

Still mindful of the effect of her train, the girl came to a standstill in front of Edith. Edith glanced at her, and went on sewing, and Mrs. Macfarlane looked on with a smile of amusement.

The girl stood for a moment looking from one lady to the other, with wonder and disgust depicted on her countenance. Jess, delighted at her discomfiture, rolled over and over in the dust, and put his tongue out to show his contempt for the yellow girl who had called him " nigger."

" Oh, missus," said the girl at last, unable to endure the silence any longer.

Edith looked up and asked what she wanted.

"Oh, missus, gimme suthin t'eat. I'se walked a piece dis morn! I come from home fo' sun up."

"Come with me, and I will give you something," said Edith.

She went to the kitchen, followed as before by Mrs. Macfarlane. The girl came afterwards, and Jess and Frankie followed her, Jess treading on her train till he tore the trimming, and then taking flight round the house where he stood on his head and performed various other antics.

Edith placed food on the table and went away. Mrs. Macfarlane stayed behind and catechised the girl.

"Where did you come from, girl?"

"I come from de Quarters. I b'longs to Uncle Pahrick."

Mrs. Macfarlane looked at her incredulously. "You? That is not possible."

"Yes'm, I does. You see Uncle Pahrick's oldest daughter she married a man 'way down in Allybama, an' I was his chile, but she took me all de same. She tell me my mother give me to her when I warn't mo'n two days ole. An' she was mighty good to me. But paw, he went to work on de railroad, and he took de chills powerful bad. Oowhey! An' maw, she died las fall. An' I reckon paw's dead, 'cause else we'd a-hearn from him."

"Ah, I thought you could not be much kin to Uncle Patrick," said Mrs. Macfarlane.

"Yes'm, I is. I done tol' you."

"That is no kin really. I knew you could not be kin to him."

"Yes'm. I allays calls him grandpaw."

"No matter. Uncle Patrick has splendid manners: just splendid, I tell you. Any one can see that he was raised in one of the first families. But you!—I don't suppose you ever belonged to anybody. You must have been raised by mean whites."

"I isn't!" the girl exclaimed indignantly.

"That's so, however. Why girl, you have no more manners than a hog."

"I isn't! De folks what raised paw, dey was quality folks. Hes ole mastah, he got mo'n a tousand slaves. Befo' de surrendah, dat was."

"Oh hush!—A thousand slaves! A likely story."

"Hit's Gawd's troof I'm tellin' yo'. Mo'n a hundred. I've heerd un say dat."

"A hundred is not a thousand. Don't you know that?"

"Wal,—it's mighty nigh."

Mrs. Macfarlane continued:—"You say you can cook. Where have you lived?"

"I bin at home wid maw all de time."

"Is she a cook?"

"Not ezackly. She cooked for paw o' co'se."

"Was that all?"

"She made her a crap. An' she allays raised a hog, an' made gyaden ebery year. We done right well down in Allybama."

The end of it was that Edith was persuaded by Mrs. Macfarlane to engage the girl. She could but send her

away if she did not suit. Edith assented, but felt as if she were engaging the creature solely to oblige her friend, who declared that she should go home ever so much happier for knowing that there would be some one to do the kitchen work after a day or two. Mrs. Macfarlane thought it was likely this one would come as she promised, since she gave her promise without either of the formulae "if I live," or "'cept death or sickness."

Mrs. Macfarlane went away before sunset, telling Edith she would be down again soon, and bidding her not be disheartened if her bread turned out heavy.

Some days elapsed, and Edith began to fear that the yellow girl was faithless. But she re-appeared one morning, accompanied by a couple of children. Edith asked to whom they belonged. Were they her brother and sister?

"Dey's my chillen," said the girl.

"You did not tell me you had those children?"

"I done forgot when I was here," said the girl, with invincible stolidity.

Edith inquired where the children lived.

"Dey lives with me o' co'se. Moss kin chop right smart, an' Dock, he kin pick up chips."

It appeared that Moss was the girl, and Dock the boy.

"What is your name?" Edith asked next. "Mrs. Macfarlane told me, but I have forgotten."

"Batheenie's my name. What's yourn?"

"I am Mrs. Tregellas."

"But you's got anoder name, 'sides dat."

"My other name is Edith."

"Edith! Dat's real putty, Edith."

Seeing a broom in the corner, Batheenie seized it, and inducted herself into her place by a vigorous sweeping. Edith went away.

Presently Batheenie appeared, broom in hand.

"Oh, mis'! Whar my bed, please ma'am?"

Edith showed her the little cabin behind the kitchen.

Batheenie went up to the bed and examined it critically.

"Ain't you all got no feather bed?"

"No. I do not like feather beds."

"I allays sleep on a feather bed."

"Then," said Edith calmly, "you had better go; for I have none, and I do not intend to get any."

Batheenie looked sullen. "Humph! Reckon I'll have to make out," she said at last.

Edith went to her room feeling doubtful whether she would send the girl away at once, or wait to hear what Harry would say about it.

As she stood looking out of window, the door was violently burst open and Batheenie entered, followed by her two children.

"What do you want? You must not enter my room without knocking," said Edith.

The girl stood still and stared. The two children, each with a thumb in its mouth, stood still and stared with widely opened unfathomable eyes; eyes which seemed incapable of winking.

"I thought mebbe yer room want fixin'," said Batheenie at last in explanation. And she began to

sweep. Edith watched her, and came to the conclusion that the principal effect of such sweeping would be to wear out the broom.

"Whar you all sleep?" was Batheenie's next inquiry, when after a short spell of sweeping she stood at rest leaning on her broom. Edith pointed to the hammocks.

"Great day in de mo'nin'!" Batheenie ejaculated. "An' don' you all sleep in beds? Who bed dat?"

Edith explained that she would sleep in a bed when the weather became cooler. Batheenie continued her sweeping with an occasional ejaculation. "Great day in de mo'nin'! Well, sah! Dat beats me!"

But, before the looking-glass she stopped short and let her broom drop. "Dis yer glass mus' ha' cos' a heap!" she exclaimed. "Well, sah!" and she looked and looked with unwinking eyes, as though her soul would never be satisfied with looking.

Edith turned away to hide a smile. No ball-room beauty could have studied the picture of herself more seriously than did this tawny savage. She belonged to the grade technically known as *quintero*. Her skin was of a peculiar shade, neither white nor yellow, nor brown nor black, but white with an apparently superficial stain on it as of walnut juice, with a yet added griminess consequent on the non-application of soap and water. Her hair was combed out so that it stood round her head like a halo. Edith looked at the children. The boy was black and shiny, with a strangely truculent expression of countenance. The girl was coffee-coloured and merely stolid.

Batheenie still continued to look in the glass. To break the spell, Edith began to question her.

"Where does your husband live, Batheenie?"

"Ain't got none." And Batheenie began therewith a vigorous but aimless sweeping.

"Is he dead?"

"Dunno." Apparently Batheenie did not desire to enter on the subject, for she said, taking up Edith's hat:—"Dat's mighty putty. I'd like to trade with you fur hit."

Edith signified that she did not wish to "trade."

"Will you let me hev hit when you's through w'arin' hit?"

"Perhaps," said Edith. "Had you not better finish sweeping?"

Thus admonished, Batheenie, with one more fond lingering look at the glass, turned from the dressing-table and swept a few more strokes. Presently she came to the corner where Edith's boots and shoes were ranged in a row, flanked by her husband's. Again Batheenie stood open-mouthed and wide-eyed. "Is dat you all shoes? You got mighty little foots," she remarked.

Edith laughed at this. Encouraged by her laugh Batheenie took up one of Harry's shooting boots, and spread her own foot out beside it. Edith observed that in digital mobility the girl's foot was almost a hand. When Batheenie had compared the size of Edith's slippers and walking boots with that of her own foot, her delight at the contrast was so great that she sat down on the floor and laughed.

While their mother was occupied in comparing the

size of her foot with that of the white folks', the two children had gradually ventured into the room. They now—with furtive glances at Edith—crept up to the corner where the boots and shoes were placed, and began to put their feet into them. This was not to be borne. Edith had begun to think that perhaps she could bring herself to bear with Batheenie, if she could once lay it well to heart that there was something of the monkey in her. But, to have her *chaussure* defiled by these children's feet was not endurable, even supposing they were cousins several degrees removed from the Simia.

"Tell these children to go away," she said. "If they stay here, you must teach them that they are not to come into my bedroom."

Batheenie turned to the children, with a suddenly assumed look of ferocity that made Edith shrink.

"You niggers, start out from hyar, 'fo' I mash yo' brains out. D'ye hyar me?"

"Oh, pray do not speak to them so harshly," Edith interposed.

Batheenie laughed. "They don' mind a cent's wuth." And they did not, for as Edith was endeavouring to make Batheenie understand what she wished for dinner, back they came again, and lolled thumb in mouth, one on each side of the doorway. Batheenie, seeing them in the glass, turned savagely on them.

"You Dock! You Moss! What I tell you? Now I'se gwine to mash you to a jelly. Now I'se gwine to w'ar you out."

The children ran off laughing, and Batheenie

followed them, uttering ferocious threats against their brains, their bones, and their skins.

Edith followed with some apprehension. They might not be much better than apes, but she did not wish them to be maimed or murdered. But when she saw Batheenie catch the boy in her arms and kiss him, she felt relieved. The threats were but "sound and fury" after all. Edith wondered whether the monkeys behaved in the same way to their young ones.

But—she thought with a sigh that would not be stifled,—what a revolution would there be if Aunt Rachel's cook were asked to put up with such an one as Batheenie for a kitchenmaid! Oh that she had one of the worst of the kitchenmaids now!

When Edith consulted her husband, he advised her to keep the girl if she chose to stay, at least till a more desirable servant should present herself. He did not wish his wife to become a drudge like a good many women whom he knew; and unless she became a drudge she must take her raw material and make the best of it. Edith submitted, because she felt it was foolish for a woman to ask her husband's opinion unless she meant to be guided by it. But, during many following days she wondered which would be the worst drudgery, to do her household duties herself, or to try vainly day after day to teach such a savage as Batheenie to tell the truth, to be clean, to be orderly, to be punctual and obedient. She wished sometimes that the girl would herself get tired of staying, and take herself and her children back to the Quarters. But food was not plentiful just then in Uncle Patrick's cabin, so

Batheenie thought best to stay on for a while where there was plenty to eat; and as for her work, she did it or left it alone, according as she "felt like it." She thought—if the word can be applied to any mental process known to Batheenie—that her new master and mistress were "notional." Mas'r Harry objected to the children peeping round the corner and in at the door, and always ordered them sternly away from the front-doorstep. And Mis' Edith was worse. For she would not be spoken to when she was saying her prayers, and she would not hear Mas'r Harry spoken of as "de boss," and she would make a fuss if Batheenie walked into her bathroom. Batheenie could have understood that, had Mis' Edith had a clubfoot or a humpback; but as it was she was "jes' notional," that was all. And Batheenie thought the English must be mighty dirty to want all that washing. She "despised" getting so much water from the spring every day, and she had no use for such "notional" folks. She only stayed on with these English because of the present paucity of food at Uncle Patrick's.

One afternoon Edith and her husband rode towards Mrs. Macfarlane's house, intending to be home before supper time. They had got halfway, when Edith found that her saddle-girth was giving way; and, as the rest of the ride was rough and hilly, it seemed prudent to turn back again.

They found the house-door wide open, though they had left it shut. That might be however, as Edith said, because Batheenie had begun to lay the supper-table. She went in and opened the door of her room.

What she saw made her cry out to her husband, who was taking the saddles off the horses.

Batheenie was standing enraptured before the glass, clothed in a dress of Edith's—an extremely tight fit—Edith's best hat was on her head, and she had squeezed her feet into a pair of Harry's shooting boots. Moss stood by with a scarf of Edith's round her head, and Dock was trying to brush his woolly pate with a pair of Harry's brushes.

Batheenie, seeing her mistress in the glass, was the more startled of the two. Her dirty yellow face became of a greyish hue, and she muttered, "Great day in de mo'nin'!"

Hearing his wife's call, Tregellas had snatched up a stick, thinking a snake had got into her room. Batheenie on seeing the stick began to scream and supplicate.

"Oh, Mas'r Harry, don't you whup me! Don't you tech me wid dat stick. I warn't gwine ter *take* Mis' Edith dress. 'Fo' Gawd, sah, I only gwine ter try it on, jes' to see how I liked hit. I gwine to ast Mis' Edith fer de pattern, an' dat's de troof, sah."

"You had better stop that howling and take those clothes off," said Tregellas. He could not help laughing when he was outside. Edith who stayed behind, found that her tawny "help" had arrayed herself from within outwards with the choicest specimens of her *trousseau;* garments which had been Aunt Elizabeth's special gift, and which, not being suitable for a workaday life, had been laid by in cedar chips in default of lavender. The peeling off of these garments was a work of time.

"Mis' Edith, *tell* Mas'r Harry not to whup me," said Batheenie, tearful and subdued by Edith's silence. (For to be called "yellow trash" would have been no more than what was to be expected under such untoward circumstances.)

Edith did not answer immediately. "If I beg him not to whip you, will you promise never to touch my things again?" she said at last.

"Nevah! I never tech nutin' no mo'." She disrobed herself at last of her mistress's property and slipped into her own filthy garments, with many profane asseverations of her inviolable truth and honesty. "*Tell* him not to whup me," she repeated.

"I shall have to beg him very hard," said Edith.

"Oh, I know he'll do anything you tell him!" Batheenie exclaimed. Ignorant and stupid as she was, she had learnt that Edith always meant exactly what she said. The instant she felt relieved from the fear of punishment, her transgression ceased to trouble her. (Negroes have many points of resemblance with white people.) She pulled the scarf off her girl's head, snatched her up in her arms, bade Dock follow her, and scampered across the yard with a whoop and a yell. Presently her voice was heard in stentorian tones chanting a negro funeral hymn to a jaunty tune full of triplets and quavers and *trilli caprini*:—

"Oh death! Oh death!
Look what you has done!
Look what you has done!
Oh, death has lost its value sting.
Death, don't cut me down so soon."

There was not the slightest danger of Batheenie getting whipped by her master, as Edith knew. But, when Tregellas found a bunch of false keys lying by the plate-chest (Aunt Rachel's gift), he said that something must be done. Every other box and drawer in the house had been opened, and if Batheenie had omitted the plate-chest, it was because she had become interested in Edith's clothes.

After making all these discoveries it was too late to go to Mrs. Macfarlane's. They went next day, and told what had taken place; and Mrs. Macfarlane agreed that it was pretty bad when a negro kept false keys and broke open her master's house. Then Edith had to explain that the house had been already open. It was only the drawers and boxes of which the locks had been picked.

Mrs. Macfarlane looked at her with wonder and pity. "You leave your house open, and then you expect a coloured girl *not* to pry into the bottom of everything that's inside it! As well put a dish of cream on the table and expect the cat not to touch it!"

"She said she had not intended to steal anything."

"Well now, Mrs. Tregellas, you don't mean to say you believed her?"

"Not quite," Edith admitted. "But when a person asseverates so earnestly, it is hard not to believe—a little."

"You'll have to cure yourself of that. Once let the darkies think that you believe everything they say, and —won't they fool you, that's all! Oh, Mr. Tregellas, why didn't you tie her up and whip her? That was

what she wanted. That is what they all want, especially the yellow ones."

Tregellas declined categorically to do the work of a bo'sun's mate.

Mrs. Macfarlane was silent for an instant, studying the meaning of the phrase. Then she laughed.

"Oh, if you are going to be so high-toned as all that! Now, is not that the way all the world over? People ask advice and then—won't take it. Well, you must either whip her or leave her alone."

"Then I think she will be left alone. The idea of whipping a woman is too disgusting," said Tregellas.

"Why, I've whipped my own child many a time, and I don't see anything disgusting in it. Of course, I was sorry to have to do it."

"But see the difference!—"

"That's just it. There is not such a difference. Of course, nobody can stand quite in the position he did before the war. Now, my grandfather never would whip a woman. If she would not behave herself, he just sold her to a trader. And the fear of being sold kept many a one in order. But now, they are all free, and some people will have it they are men and women like us. They are not. They are just children, and children they always will be. And, like children, if you don't 'boss' them, you'll be bossed by them; and you will be having trouble all the time."

"I should like to try mild methods first."

"Mild methods! I admire to hear *you* talk, Mr. Tregellas, when you know there is flogging in the British navy."

"But, consider the difference—" said Tregellas, who had not expected this attack in the rear.

"Yes, I do see the difference. You flog white men that are just as good as yourselves, because they've been drunk, or a bit saucy, perhaps. And yet you cry out at the idea of whipping a trifling creature that wants a whipping as badly as ever a yellow girl did. Oh, come away!" she cried, jumping up. "Come away and see my chickens, Mis' Tregellas. I won't say a word more. Englishmen are too hard-headed. That's about it."

Mrs. Macfarlane drew Edith out of the room, while Mr. Macfarlane observed that if Englishmen were hard-headed, he had known American women who were a match for them. He had often thought that Mrs. Macfarlane must be kin to the woman who cried "scissors."

Mrs. Macfarlane laughed when they were out in the yard together. "My dear," she said confidentially, "whenever he says smart things like that, I never reply. I always let him have the privilege of the last word. What do I care? I know I could have it if I liked."

Mrs. Macfarlane had already discovered that Mrs. Tregellas was a very reticent woman. Telling so little about herself, and making no remarks about other people, it was no wonder if the task of keeping up a flow of small talk became now and then burdensome even to one so ready as was Mrs. Macfarlane. She could not quite tell why she liked Mrs. Tregellas so much, for she felt this reticence a great drawback to their friendship. She herself had nothing to hide, she said (with the usual feminine reservation). Of course, no one

wanted to tell quite everything. But if, for instance, one had rich relations, why not talk of them? Why not talk of one's courtship, and one's husband, and of the men who had made offers and been refused? However, as Edith seemed inclined to unbend a little this afternoon, Mrs. Macfarlane thought it would be a good opportunity to get some information out of her about the Harmonia people. There was Mrs. Haverstock, a colonel's lady, who always gave it to be understood that there was no lady in Harmonia to rank with her. Was she a member of the British aris—tocracy? There was Mrs. Lovett, who knew a great many sirs and ladies. Now, what was she? And who were these big people?

"Knights and dames, perhaps," Edith suggested.

Mrs. Macfarlane reflected. "That's another thing again. No, I've heard her talk of baronets and baronesses, but never of knights and dames. Are knights and dames prominent members of the British aristocracy?"

"Possibly: but not generally," said Edith, who felt that here was a moment when she must keep the door of her lips with care.

"I'm getting mixed already. Are Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Colonel Haverstock members of the British aris—tocracy?"

"Perhaps you had better ask them. I cannot tell you."

"Well,—are you one?"

"Oh no!"

Mrs. Macfarlane looked at Edith. "There is nothing

so deceptive as appearances," she said. "I would have sworn you were one, though you did say you were a clergyman's daughter. I made sure you had a lord in the family, lying around somewhere."

"I do not think we have such a possession," said Edith.

Mrs. Macfarlane continued her search for information. "Your father was a minister, you say."

"A clergyman," Edith corrected.

"But Mr. Bloss is a clergyman. He wasn't much like Mr. Bloss, I should think, to judge by you."

Edith assured her that he was not in the least like Mr. Bloss; and then, to give a turn to the conversation, she asked what Mrs. Macfarlane thought of Mr. Raine.

Mrs. Macfarlane's lip curled in scorn. "Mr. Raine! Quite a lowdown sort of a fellow, isn't he? He's got no jewellery, and I've seen him walking about with his coat torn and his pants in his boots and not a par—ticle of collar. Give me Mr. Croker, who is always well-dressed and wears his diamond ring and his diamond studs as a gentleman should."

Edith said that she had been told that Mr. Croker's father was a tailor (though that ought to make no difference if he were a good fellow). But she knew for a fact that Mr. Raine was Lord Raine's son.

"That fellow with his torn coat a member of your British aris—tocracy? And I made so sure he wasn't much folks!—Oh, for heaven's sake, let's go into the kitchen and make a cake. I want to get back to practical life. Your aris—tocracy is too mixed for my

comprehension. And I believe there are just as nice people out of it as in it."

"I have always thought so," said Edith.

While Mrs. Macfarlane had been endeavouring to get at the true inwardness of the British aristocracy, Mr. Macfarlane had been doing his best to persuade Tregellas to allow himself to be elected one of the vestry. There was to be a meeting of the members of the church in a day or two for the election of a new vestryman *vice* Colonel Haverstock, resigned; and, if Tregellas would allow his name to be put up, he, Macfarlane, would guarantee his election. Tregellas refused at first. He had plenty to attend to at home, he said; he knew nothing of the duties of a vestryman, and he lived too far from Harmonia.

But Macfarlane set aside one objection after the other, and Tregellas at length allowed himself to be persuaded; though how, he said, he should discharge functions, whatever they might be, which a colonel and a landsman felt too onerous, he did not see. How should a lieutenant in the navy know what it concerned a vestryman to know?

It was explained to Tregellas that the duties were not onerous, nor were the meetings frequent. The reason of the Colonel's resigning was that Mrs. Haverstock would let him have no peace till he did. She was at loggerheads with Mr. Bloss, and had on one occasion denounced him before the congregation for preaching wrong doctrine. The new vestryman was necessary because the vestry must shortly meet to settle something about the clergyman's stipend, which was in

arrears. They would have to send round the hat, Macfarlane supposed; but whether Mr. Bloss would get all he wanted, even then, was more than he was prepared to say. The clergyman's stipend had been fixed at Easter at four hundred dollars, with a specified amount of firewood hauled and cut ready for use; the parsonage to be kept in good repair, and a garden laid out by the joint efforts of the parishioners. Major Forepaw, who had had the chief hand in bringing Mr. Bloss to Harmonia, had also settled the stipend pretty much according to his own liking. Of course a stipend had to be named before the vestry could apply to the bishop. The vestry was responsible for the stipend, and if they could not bring the congregation up to the scratch, said Macfarlane, he himself, the Colonel, and the Major would have to put their hands in their pockets. The Major had been feeling badly about it, and had said a thing or two to Mr. Bloss, which Mr. Bloss had resented. Members of the congregation had told the Major in an informal manner that the stipend was too large for an infant settlement like Harmonia; and Mr. Bloss had told the Major in a manner equally informal that the stipend was miserably small, and that if the congregation did not shell out in a handsomer manner, he should feel it his duty to place his resignation in the hands of the bishop.

According to a canon of the American Episcopal Church, the clergyman could not resign his charge without the consent of the vestry: but, said Macfarlane, Bloss was after the loaves and fishes, and cared nothing for the canons of the church. Bloss thought the

labourer was worthy of his hire, and he would stick to that wherever he happened to be.

Major Forepaw looked on the church as a good advertisement, and if Bloss went, he would take care there was a successor. Harmonia church stood as a sign of Harmonia's respectability; and respectability attracted the respectable, just as rowdyism attracted rowdies. The Major was as smart as any man alive, and he said the church kept people together more than anything. Macfarlane had never had time, he said, to study the matter out; he just took the Major's word for it, because the Major was such a smart man.

CHAPTER XII.

A VESTRY MEETING.

It all happened as Macfarlane had wished and intended. In his way (which however was not a disagreeable way) he could be as persistent as his wife. Tregellas weighed the thing in his mind for a day or two, talked it over with Edith, and allowed his name to be put up. He was elected without opposition, and found himself in consequence one of the eight assembled a little later in the church to solve the question of the deficiency in the clergyman's stipend. A deal table was set in the chancel, but there were not chairs enough for all, so some sat on the steps, and the hats, by one consent, were put inside the communion railing. Then the meeting was called to order. It was also suggested by the Major that it might be as well to come to some understanding now as to the amount of next year's stipend, instead of waiting for Easter. Many more arrivals were not to be expected this year, and there was no saying what would be the actual number of new settlers at Easter time—appearances were so deceptive. There had been the drought last year, which had

frightened away some people: and the labourers' strike this year had frightened away many more.

Tregellas was surprised to see Mr. Bloss enter, lay his hat on the altar, and take a seat at the table, after the meeting had been called to order. He did not understand how such a matter as the clergyman's stipend was to be discussed at all if the clergyman were present; and it seemed to him to argue a great want of delicacy in the mind of the clergyman, that he should wish to be present. But he had yet to learn that questions of delicacy never occupied this clergyman's mind. And, to judge from the discussion which followed, the presence of Mr. Bloss was felt to be no hindrance by the party which intended to vote for a reduction of the stipend. There was nothing actually uncivil said (at least in intention), but it was plain that many of the vestrymen were considering their own pockets rather than the necessities of their pastor.

"Seems to me," said the postmaster, "it would be a better plan to get the bishop to nominate some young man that was without incumbrance, and could board around. A married clergyman can't do that of co'se, but it's been done time and again in the case of young clergymen. And the young men are always popular with the ladies. No offence to Mr. Bloss. Mr. Bloss is booked, and he knows it. It's what we must all come to."

"That's so," assented Boniface with a chuckle. "Now personally, I'd like to name a handsome sum—say—a thousand dollars." Mr. Bloss pricked up his ears. "But where is it to come from? I know right well

that folks would be more liberal if they could; but we're young yet, and money is not being made. Bound to sow before we reap, eh, Mr. Bloss?"

"Wal," said old man Flippoto, "all I can say is this: that I've seen the time when I'd have jumped at the i—dee of getting four hundred dollars, and house and lot, an' firewood hauled an' cut, and not a soli—tary thing to do for't but stand up once a week and read prayers outen a book, and preach outen another book, an' ride around just when I felt like it."

"You take a very low view of the pastorate, I fear, Mr. Flippoto," said Mr. Bloss.

"Mebbe I do," said the other carelessly.

"The fact is," said Mr. Bloss, "the sum that was settled on me last year was supposed to be a sort of nucleus, and I was led to believe that there would be extras. Now, as a matter of fact, there have been no extras."

"What might you mean by extrys, Mr. Bloss?" said old man Flippoto in a defiant tone. "I'll take leave to say that in the matter of extrys I've done my part. I sent you a bar'l of best family flour, sir, at Christmas time, and the old lady donated Mis' Bloss one of her biggest turkeys at Thanksgiving."

"You were truly liberal, Mr. Flippoto," said Mr. Bloss, who did not appear offended in the least, "and I trust I made proper acknowledgments. But those extras were not what the vestry alluded to, I take it, when they gave me a call. I speak under correction."

"Oh, you mean the christenings and weddings and buryings," said Boniface. And everybody laughed as

if Mr. Bloss's disappointment in that direction were a huge joke.

"There ain't been a soli—tary one, I declar'!" said Flippoto, who became almost apoplectic in his merriment.

"I dare say you all think it very funny," said Mr. Bloss, who was greatly nettled. "But it's a fact that I was distinctly led to expect what naturally falls to the officiating pastor on such occasions, and consequently I feel myself out of pocket; and I am out of pocket."

"Well, Mr. Bloss, you must live in hopes," said Boniface. "It's real mean of folks to behave that-a-way, but I guess they won't be able to hold on for everlasting. They are bound to do something in that line before long, 'cause why, the world must go around till judgment day comes. Lor, now, don't any married man among you all know of any babby that's likely to want a-baptizing before long? Jes' to encourage the minister, don't you know?"

The joke was relished to its full extent. Once more old man Flippoto appeared to be on the verge of apoplexy. Other witticisms of a similar nature followed, which it is not necessary to set down. Tregellas sat silent and disgusted. "Is this the sort of thing that goes on at these meetings?" he said to Major Forepaw.

The Major, who was in the chair, had laughed as loudly as Boniface or Flippoto.

"This ain't any quakers' meeting, I believe," said the Major, throwing himself back with a magisterial air.

Tregellas observed that the day was passing, that he wished to be home before nightfall, and that he should

be glad to know before he went what the vestry was going to decide on, and what would be the probable amount of the contribution expected of him.

The vestry having had its joke, now proceeded to business. There were jottings down on paper, and muttered conferences with Major Forepaw, and fragments of sentences and detached words fell on Tregellas's ear; words which he was quite sure that Mr. Bloss must hear as well as himself. "Ten dollars," "couldn't afford it," "business very slack," "young pigs," "lost money by the strike," were some of the disconnected sentences. But Mr. Bloss, sitting a little apart, seemed to listen greedily. Harry had pitied the man for being in a situation which to him would have been too humiliating to be endured. But he began to feel as he looked at the man's face, that pity would be thrown away. He considered a little before coming to a decision, and consulted a moment with Macfarlane. Macfarlane made a suggestion and nodded. "Very good. H—m. Suppose you say in addition, a shote." And Tregellas felt sure that Mr. Bloss was pricking up his ears at the word. Approaching Major Forepaw, Tregellas laid on the table twenty dollars as his contribution, and agreed verbally to supply the clergyman's household with a pig in good condition at the proper time. "Shote, shote, wasn't it?" whispered the Major, and it seemed as though Mr. Bloss's lips moved and formed the word "shote."

"A pig is a wee thing," Macfarlane explained. "Shote is a half-grown pig. Didn't ye know that?"

"A shote be it," said Harry, who felt annoyed at the

absurd mistake, though he would have laughed had Mr. Bloss not been present. "Shote" as designating a young porker was a new word to him.

The Major got up and made a stiff bow. "Cap'n," he said, in what appeared to Harry a very loud voice, "we are much obliged for your liberality, sir, I'm sure we shall always find you ready to do the square thing. Mr. Bloss, sir." Mr. Bloss arose and approached Major Forepaw's end of the table.

"The Cap'n's do—nation, sir. I pass it over to you, sir, as the party inter—ested. A shote, I think you mentioned, Cap'n?"

"Certainly," said Harry; who was fast losing his temper, and was repenting that he had allowed himself to be made vestryman.

"I'm greatly obliged, sir," said Mr. Bloss, pocketing the dollars.

"If all contributors would shell out in the same gentlemanly way, we wouldn't be in a hard place, eh, Mr. Bloss?"

Mr. Bloss shook his head and said "Ah."

"Yes, the Cap'n has done the gentlemanly thing," said the Major.

"Good God, Major," Harry exclaimed, "did you expect I should do other than the gentlemanly thing?"

Mr. Bloss shut his eyes and put his fingers in his ears. "Swear not at all," he murmured, slowly wagging his head. "Alas, alas!"

The aspect of the man was so foolish, that Harry burst out laughing. "I beg your pardon," he said. "If that's swearing, I didn't mean it as such. I'm very

sorry. I'll wait for you outside, Macfarlane," he said; and nodding to the rest he went out.

"Seems sort o'peppery," observed the Major. "However, youv'e got your dollars safe, Bloss, so you needn't mind. Now, gentlemen, let us proceed." And he scribbled on the paper before him. "Mr. Tregellas, twenty dollars and a shote." A shote is worth—Wouldn't a shote be worth five dollars, Macfarlane?" Macfarlane said that would be the value of a shote, that was a good shote, and not a runt. And he thought they might trust Mr. Tregellas not to give the parson a runt.

"Then that brings Mr. Tregellas's contribution up to twenty-five dollars. I call that very fair indeed, for a young man that is only just beginning, and ain't got much capital. Well, gentlemen, that contribution will be a very good guide to us as to the amount other folks ought to contribute. Now there's Lovett. How much should Lovett be asked to give? And Macgregor?"

"It's all voluntary, Major, don't you know," old Flippoto objected. "Strictly voluntary."

"Of course it's voluntary. But there's some folks that want to have the screw put on before they can be got to do the voluntary business. I can't quite make out Lovett, myself. He always talks as if he'd had hard times all his life, and Mis' Lovett talks as if she'd been in the habit of curling her hair with greenbacks. But there's Macgregor. There's no doubt about Macgregor."

"I should say there was very great doubt about Macgregor," said Macfarlane. And there was a general laugh.

"There ain't a par—ticle of doubt what he ought to do," said Boniface. "He turns over more money than any one in the settlement."

"Except yourself," Mr. Bloss put in.

"My money goes out as fast as it comes in, Mr. Bloss," said Boniface, a little redder than usual. "Mr. Macgregor puts his into the Jonesville Bank, unless I'm much mistaken. And I know Mis' Macgregor has invested in United States Bonds since she came here. I believe that's a woman as will turn everything she touches into money. Some women are that-a-way. I wish my old lady was one of that sort. But she ain't. She'll never want to invest in United States Bonds, no, sir," said Boniface, with a slow shake of the head.

"No more will mine, cause she'll never have the chance," said Flippoto with a laugh.

"That's all mighty fine, Boniface," said the Major. "But it's too thin. You wait till we're through with Macgregor, and we'll make you shell out."

It appeared quite clear to every one present, that if such an one as Mr. Tregellas could pay in currency and in kind, to the value of twenty-five dollars, Macgregor should surely be able to pay twice that amount for the support of the pastor. The pastor himself, sitting in his chair a little outside the circle, murmured a modest assent to the universal opinion.

"That means," said Macfarlane, "that if Tregellas can give twenty dollars and a shote, Macgregor can give forty dollars and two shotes. Now let me tell you that Macgregor will see you all to blazes first."

Mr. Bloss moved uneasily in his chair. Would it

be necessary for him to rebuke two members of his congregation in the course of a single meeting? But a roar of laughter greeted Macfarlane's sally, and Mr. Bloss's opportunity was lost.

"He's a fellow countryman of yours," said the postmaster. "You ought to know his disposition."

"Perhaps Mr. Macfarlane has a fellow feeling too," said Boniface.

"You bet that if Mis' Macgregor has to choose them shotes, they'll be runts," said the postmaster. "She's the smartest lady I know, and the hardest to make a bargain with."

The Major made a few more jottings; and looking at his watch, observed that the time was up. A compromise was hastily agreed to. The clergyman's salary was voted at four hundred and fifty dollars for the ensuing year, with firewood, four shotes, and twenty bushels of corn to be collected from the poorer members of the congregation. Then, as Boniface jocularly remarked, if any fat turkeys, or barrels of family flour, or butter and eggs were donated, he didn't suppose they'd be refused.

"And," said the Major, standing on the church steps, and shaking hands all round, "we'll have to take the hat round some time between harvest and thanksgiving, or else take up a collection in church. That collection for the Indian missions did pretty well, last fall. I thought myself at the time, that 'twould be better to let the Indians slide, and make the money over to Mr. Bloss. Pay your debts first, and be liberal afterwards, is what I go by."

"As to the collection for the Indians," said Mr. Bloss, with some asperity, "I told you then, that I could not help myself. I did represent to the bishop that my salary was much in arrears. But he replied, that the people ought to do the one, and not leave the other undone. Of course, I could make no reply to that."

"I could have made a very good reply, I think. However, it don't matter a cent's wuth now. Last year is dead and gone," said Boniface, nodding to one and the other as he departed up the street.

Mrs. Bloss was watching anxiously at her front parlour window for her husband's return. She hardly waited for him to come inside and shut the door, so eager was she to know the result of the vestry meeting.

"Well, how is it to be?" she exclaimed. "How have they behaved?"

"Oh," said the parson, throwing his hat down on the table, "they might have behaved better, and they might have behaved worse. When will supper be ready?"

"But are you going to stay? That is the main thing."

"Oh, I suppose I am. You know we might go further and fare worse, when all is said and done."

"Why, Mr. Bloss, that's what I have been telling you all the time. I'm glad you've laid it to heart. I'm sure, when I think of the neuralgia I got from the packing up when we moved here,—oh, my!—I think I'd rather stay on till the people starved us out."

Mr. Bloss threw himself on the sofa. "I wish you would have supper, Araminta," he exclaimed peevishly, 'I am worn out with headache. I always am, at these

vestry meetings. What is there for supper? I could eat a bit of cold roast chicken. I'm tired of fried meats." Knowing full well that she would not succeed in getting a full account of the meeting till her husband's inner man was satisfied, Mrs. Bloss hurried the servant, and laid the cloth with her own hands. By the time Mr. Bloss had dispatched two large cups of strong tea, half a roast chicken, and a plate of batter-cakes with molasses and sugar, he was in a better humour; and when he volunteered to prepare a piece of bread and honey for his son, Mrs. Bloss felt that she might cross question him as to the vestry meeting with impunity.

"Try this pickled cucumber, Mr. Bloss, it's just splendid; Mis' Macfarlane sent it this very day," said she.

"Pickled cucumber? Ha, hum," said Mr. Bloss reflectively. "Well," he said, when he had tasted a piece, "if Mrs. Macfarlane wants to send any more of the same, I'm agreeable. Why don't you make pickles like that, eh, Araminta?" and he held out his plate for more.

"Silly!" exclaimed the lady, as she pushed the pickle dish towards him. "Ain't it cheaper to get them do—nated, than to go mussing around, and getting the headache fixing up pickles? I can tell you, sweet pickle like this can't be made for nothing. I know by the look of it, that Mis' Macfarlane has used the best coffee sugar."

"Oh, let us keep to donations, by all means," said Mr. Bloss laughing. And, under the combined sweet

influence of more strong tea, and more sweet pickle, he gave his wife such an account of the meeting as she desired; even descending to the minute detail which some feminine souls crave, but which the masculine soul generally overlooks or despises.

"They've made that young Tregellas a vestryman."

Mrs. Bloss nodded. "I know. Mis' Macfarlane brought Mis' Tregellas to call, just before they went down to the place they bought. I've never been to see her yet."

"Then you'd better make haste and go," said Mr. Bloss.

"I thought she seemed sort of standoffish. I didn't take a fancy to her. Of course, I mean to call some day."

"A pack of nonsense," exclaimed Mr. Bloss. "Her husband is a straightforward young fellow; and paid up in advance, like a gentleman. I wish every one would take a leaf out of his book. Look there!" and he took the twenty dollars out of his pocket and threw them on the table.

"Well, I declare!" said Mrs. Bloss, with a smile. Coin was still a rarity, in comparison with greenbacks.

"Well, Mr. Bloss, that *is* nice," she said, fingering the fresh, clean silver pieces. "La, if every one would be as straightforward, we should see our way clear, should we not?"

"I should rather think so! Now, don't you see, Araminta, how perfectly ridiculous you are with your likes and dislikes? Not one man has paid me in

advance, as this young Tregellas has done; and here you are taking a dislike to his wife."

"I didn't say that. Anyhow, she don't know it."

"Well, you haven't thought it worth while to return her call."

"Bless me, a thousand things might have prevented me, even if she had been my dearest friend. I shall make it all right, don't you fear."

"I hope you will. We can't afford to have likes and dislikes. We couldn't afford it, if I were a popular New York preacher getting my forty thousand dollars a year. We've got to be all things to all men, Araminta. Now, for instance, there's this man Tregellas. I ought to know an English gentleman when I see him, and he is one. I could see with half an eye, that he felt among us all like a fish out of water. When those fellows were cutting their jokes, I could see that he thought it bad taste. And bad taste it was."

"Well, so it was; just impudence, That man Boniface wants a setting down, and I hope he may get it some day."

"But on the other hand, he is a thoroughly godless man, like all those army and navy fellows, no doubt."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Bloss.

"Yes; I felt it my duty to rebuke him for profane swearing; and I did it; and I should do it again," said Mr. Bloss, with a voice and mien that might have sat well on one of the Seven Champions of Christendom.

"*Good* gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Bloss. "Was he *very* profane?"

"He said enough to show what manner of man he was."

"I hope you weren't too severe, Mr. Bloss. Of course a clergyman has to do his duty all the time. Still——"

"I said as much as I thought was necessary."

"You've got the dollars, anyway," said Mrs. Bloss.

After supper Mr. Bloss bade his wife shut one window lest he should be in a draught. He put on a velvet cap, made for him by an ardent young parishioner in the place where he had spent his first year of pastorate, and laid himself on the sofa to take forty winks before beginning the arduous duty of looking out next Sunday's sermon.

"By the bye," he exclaimed, after a few preparatory snores which had resulted in a sudden waking up, "did I mention that Tregellas promised a shote?"

"A shote! Oh, I wish he had said a hog," said Mrs. Bloss.

"Well, my dear, a shote is a shote; if you feed it for three months it will be a hog."

"That's just it. If you have shotes, they have to be fattened up, and I have to attend to that; you never do. And there's the corn! How do you know you'll have corn to spare? People don't bring corn to surprise parties."

"H—m!" said Mr. Bloss, sitting upright. "I confess I never thought of that. How is a minister of the Gospel to think of such sordid matters? And there was a talk of getting Macgregor to send two shotes."

"Well, I shall just let everybody know that I don't

want shotes. You just tell them that I despise shotes, will you?"

"Really, my dear, you will have to manage that yourself. One can't look a gift horse in the mouth, you know," said Mr. Bloss, once more composing himself to slumber.

But Mrs. Bloss did not slumber. She took her rocking chair into the porch, and bethought herself what to do. It was always the way, she thought with a sigh. If there was a word to be said, Mr. Bloss left it unsaid; and if there was a word that were better left unsaid, Mr. Bloss was certain to blurt out that word. Let people donate hogs, as many as they pleased; but not shotes, that wanted three months' feeding before they were fit to butcher. "The idiot!" she said to herself between her closed teeth. "He always makes a muddle of everything."

CHAPTER XIII.

A SEWING BEE.

After the signal failure of her marauding enterprise, Batheenie bowed herself to circumstances. Tregellas had impounded her false keys, and there were no more to be procured from the Quarters for love or money. Those who had them guarded them as treasures beyond price, and kept their possession a secret, even from their families. So Batheenie "concluded" to take a "spell" at cooking till better times came; and, except for the innate negro tendency to smother every kind of food in grease, she did not do worse than many an English plain cook. In some respects she did better, for, whereas an English plain cook clothes herself with her ignorance as with a garment, Batheenie was willing to take hints, and would never allow that she was ignorant of anything. It might have been supposed that in some previous state of existence she had originated every receipt in Edith's cookery book; for, whenever Edith wished to teach her anything, it always happened to be something she had "done forgot;" and she would cast up her eyes

to a certain beam in the kitchen roof, as if the key to her memory was hidden there. "I reckon I can fix it ef you gimme the things," she would say.

Edith in spite of her unwillingness found herself at last persuaded by Mrs. Macfarlane to have a sewing bee. It was represented to her that here would be an opportunity for the Harmonia ladies to meet and get better acquainted; and, if the bee did not take place, the opportunity would be lost.

"We are not fixed for dancing parties," said Mrs. Macfarlane, "so we must do the next best thing. And after all, when I say dancing parties, I mean just any kind of a pleasant, social gathering, for there are not young folks enough in all Harmonia for a regular, set dancing party. I don't think you English are a bit social. Why, if you all were Americans in a strange land, you would be dear friends by this time. Don't tell me about not caring to come to a sewing-party, and sewing for a mere stranger. They ought to care, and if you are a stranger after this length of time to your own countrywomen,—why,—I'm mighty sorry for you all, and I'm glad I am an American."

Edith found less difficulty than she had expected among her English acquaintance. Mrs. Lovett, whose husband had done so well in Australia till he over-speculated in corn, was in a chronic state of discontent with Harmonia and all belonging to it. She had got her house to live in at last, and was trying in vain to live up to her æsthetic tea gowns with a yellow girl of the stamp of Batheenie, instead of a trim serving woman with an æsthetic costume to match the tea gowns. Even

an afternoon spent in plain sewing would be better than one spent in dull discontent. Mrs. Macgregor who by this time had learnt all the particulars of the vestry meeting, made no difficulty on the score of distance. She desired to free her mind on the subject of shotes, and if she found her opportunity at the bee the afternoon would not be wasted. For Mrs. Macgregor's wrath had been great when she heard from Mr. Macfarlane the decision arrived at by the vestry respecting the parson's stipend. Because young Mr. Tregellas had paid twenty dollars down, and had promised a shote, a good shote, and not a runt,—as Mr. Macfarlane had repeated with a jocular impressiveness that was offensive,—therefore the Macgregors were to be mulcted in forty dollars and two shotes. Mrs. Macgregor had actually gasped when this thing was told her by the facetious assistant manager; and, she being seated in her buggy at the time, waiting till the mail should be sorted, Macfarlane had declared that she had turned pale and dropped the reins and that he had been obliged to replace them in her hands. "I think you are all clean gone out of your wits," she had said. And Macfarlane had further declared that she had relieved her feelings by lashing the horse all the way down the street. Macgregor could have told of a very bad quarter of an hour that afternoon: but he was used to such evil times, and would tell himself that that was the price he had to pay for marrying a widow.

Mrs. Macgregor was quite sure that such a contribution as Mr. Tregellas had made was very far beyond his means. Five dollars down, and five dollars next harvest time, and a few odds and ends thrown in as

convenient, would, she was sure, have been ample. She knew the acreage of Tregellas's place, the smallness of the area of cleared land, and the probable smallness of the crop. Mrs. Tregellas, of course, was an inexperienced young thing, and so was her husband. But it was not fair that the whole community should be crippled that Mr. Bloss might grow fat on contributions levied on a scale so unsound and unjust. The Tregellases must be taught the ins and outs of things. It was scandalous that Mr. Bloss should not be satisfied with four hundred dollars in cash. Mrs. Macgregor reflected how many a Scotch minister had had no larger sum than that, and had been thankful for it and had brought up a family respectably on it. It was a cutting down Mr. Bloss wanted, not an increase of salary. And as for Mrs. Bloss!—If there was a thing Mrs. Macgregor disliked, it was to see a married woman lolling in a rocking-chair before dinner. Ill-health! It was enough to give any woman ill-health to loll so much. Did she, Margaret Macgregor, ever sit down from morning to night, except at mealtimes and on Sundays? Even when she sat at the sewing-machine, were not feet and hands equally busy? She knew that Mrs. Bloss bought her own clothes and her child's clothes, ready made, and she felt that it was a wicked misapplication of her — Margaret Macgregor's — money. She would go early to this bee, and find an opportunity to say a word of good counsel to Mrs. Bloss. And she was determined that Mr. Bloss should not have two shotes. All gifts were voluntary. Perhaps, if Mrs. Bloss behaved well, and times were not too hard, she

would fatten up the oldest turkey gobbler and send her at Christmas time. But she would make no promises, even to herself.

Edith had not asked Mrs. Bloss to her bee, because Mrs. Bloss had not returned her call. She was rather surprised when Mrs. Macfarlane told her that Mrs. Bloss had asked for a seat in her buggy.

"You should have asked her anyhow, being the minister's wife," Mrs. Macfarlane said. "As to calling —well, she don't go around much—just as she feels like it, I reckon. She's coming with me, because she thinks maybe you'll have some pretty costumes, and she'd like to see them. And you'll have a lot of English goods, too. And then—I suppose there will be a spread; and she supposes so too."

"Yes; the spread!" said Edith. "What am I to do if Batheenie wants to take a holiday in the midst of my preparations?"

"I'd fix her holiday!" cried Mrs. Macfarlane. "Say that you won't pay her wages if she does."

That could not be done, because her wages were always paid punctually, Edith said. Mrs. Macfarlane declared Edith was making a sad mistake. She would never have the whip hand, if she did not make it a rule to keep back some part of the servant's wages till Christmas time when they might all be expected to change places. However, Mrs. Macfarlane promised to bring down cake and custard and pickled peaches; and perhaps, she suggested, the darkey could boil a ham.

Batheenie, hearing that there was to be a bee, revolved the matter in her mind; and, judging that

there would be "fine eatin's," refrained from having "particular business" at the Quarters about that time. She consented to boil a ham the day before; and as the weather was so hot, she built an *impromptu* fire-place in the middle of the yard, and set thereon a big round three-legged iron pot lent by Mrs. Macfarlane. It was a "frolic" for her and her two brats to sit all day and watch the pot, and do nothing else except cook their own corn bread in the ashes. They ate their dinners sitting on the ground, and sang doleful hymns in stentorian voices, and when they were tired of singing hymns they stood up and "shouted." For Batheenie was a church member, as she was never tired of telling Edith: and all good church members shouted. "Shouting" is an ancient religious ceremony. When David danced before the ark, it was a kind of "shouting," no doubt. The negroes do now, as their fathers did, perhaps long before David's time. There are certain rules for the performance, which may not be infringed. The feet may not be crossed, for that is dancing. So Batheenie did her shouting, and Moss and Dock sat by and shrieked in unison to their mother's hymn. It seemed to Edith like a rehearsal of some horrid incantation, in which occurred such phrases as "Swing low, sweet charyot," "Gab'l, blow yer horn," and others equally devoid of meaning.

Mrs. Macfarlane came on the day appointed; an hour before Edith expected any one, to help "fix," as she said. Edith, who was already beginning to feel tired, kissed her and said she was the kindest woman in the world: at which Mrs. Macfarlane laughed, and proceeded to

place her contribution on the table. She had brought enough for the whole party, and took Edith's exclamations of wonder as a delicate compliment.

When the Ellacombes arrived there was a new hesitation in Mrs. Ellacombe's manner, and an increase of shyness in her daughter, which Edith was at a loss to understand. But presently Mary drew her aside and confessed with many blushes that there was a hamper in the buggy, and that her mother had brought a few things and hoped Mrs. Tregellas would not think it a liberty. She had put in a cottage cheese—mother was a great hand at cottage cheese—and a couple of roast chickens and the material for a Devonshire junket. And—would Mrs. Tregellas excuse it? There was no brandy to put in the junket, but she had brought plenty of Devonshire cream to put on it.

"Grandmother's cookery book says brandy," said Mary. "But you know what father thinks. And he would have been so hurt if I had gone to the store and asked for brandy!—" As she spoke she blushed more beautifully than ever. Edith smiled and kissed her, saying she would not have Mr. Ellacombe's feelings hurt for the world. Mary returned the kiss shyly. She had taken a great liking to Edith, but she had never expected to be kissed; and she would assuredly never have presumed to be the first to kiss a lady who had been born a de Glanvile.

Mrs. Bloss had driven over in Mrs. Macfarlane's buggy which had been sent specially for her. Mr. Bloss had a buggy, but whenever Mrs. Bloss wanted it, it had something the matter with a wheel. It was

soon an open secret that Mrs. Macfarlane and Mrs. Ellacombe had brought with them supplies for their hostess's table, and Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Macgregor looked put out, because it was as though they had failed in kindness to their neighbour by bringing nothing. And of course, as they said to each other, had there been the slightest hint that the bee was really a picnic, they would have known how to act. Mrs. Bloss was not put out at all; as a minister's wife nobody expected her to contribute anything for anybody. She informed the company in general that she had had a nervous headache for a week, and would be in her bed now, only Mr. Bloss would have it that a buggy ride would do her good. She took up a pillow-case, begged Edith for a thimble, did a few stitches, and then threw it down, declaring it was too hot to work. She wondered why Mrs. Tregellas did not get a sewing machine, which would run up a dozen pillow-cases in a few minutes. Then she fanned herself and complained of the flies.

"It is that piece of wood that attracts them," she said. "If I was you, Mis' Tregellas, I'd have every stick of it cut down. Oh me! I never could bear flies." Edith thought her manner impertinent, and made her no answer.

Mrs. Haverstock had accompanied her daughters, hoping that there might be an opportunity of saying a word to the people who were sitting in darkness. She had chosen half a dozen tracts with pink covers, and she hoped to distribute these before the party broke up. Meanwhile, she found herself sewing amicably

with Mrs. Ellacombe at opposite ends of the same sheet.

Had Edith been acquainted with the finer shades of feeling in Harmonia, she might perhaps have shrunk from inviting Mrs. Bloss to sit for a whole afternoon in the same room with Mrs. Haverstock or even Mrs. Macgregor. But she was only conscious that—so far—they seemed to have little to say to each other, and that a certain air of uneasiness and restraint sat upon most of the party. However, when she returned from the kitchen where she had gone to make the coffee, she found that some of her guests were conversing. Mrs. Macfarlane appeared amused, and Mrs. Bloss had taken up her pillow-case and was sewing with the air of a martyr.

"Happiness — mere earthly happiness — is a low thing." It was Mrs. Haverstock who spoke, and there was a *basso profondo tremolo* in her voice to emphasize the sentiment.

A dissentient sigh from Mrs. Bontecoe was the only immediate reply. Edith busied herself with her duties as hostess. She refrained from replying, because she knew that whenever she did reply to Mrs. Haverstock's "views" she became sarcastic.

Mrs. Macfarlane looked up from her work with a twinkle in her eye. "I'm afraid I must be a very low person, for it seems to me as if I could never get enough of what you call 'mere' earthly happiness. I like to make everybody happy around me, and I like being happy myself. A good time all round, is my idea."

"I always thought," Mrs. Ellacombe said timidly, "that happiness, prosperity, and the like, were gifts for which we were bound to give thanks."

"Certainly, they are gifts from Heaven," said Edith. "Whence can they come, if not from the Giver of all good?"

"Of course; not a doubt of it," said Mrs. Bloss with emphasis. She wondered at Mrs. Tregellas for inviting her enemy to meet her. For Mrs. "Colonel" Haverstock could not be counted otherwise, since her accusation of Mr. Bloss. Mr. Bloss might be an idiot, but he had gone through the theological seminary at Chinquapin, and he had been ordained and recommended by Bishop Thrasher, and it was not for a Mrs. "Colonel" Haverstock of England to rise up in the midst of the congregation and accuse him of preaching false doctrine. Mrs. Bloss had declared that she would never speak to Mrs. Haverstock again. Mr. Bloss—idiot though he might be in some respects—had prevailed on her not to resort to such extreme measures; but there had been a cessation of intercourse between the ladies, though whenever the gentlemen met, they met on friendly terms.

"There is no 'of course,' in it," said Mrs. Haverstock; and every one knew she was speaking "at" Mrs. Bloss, though she did not look at her. "Happiness is just as likely as not to be a snare of the devil."

"Dear me!—That sounds very blasphemous," said Mrs. Bloss, who felt that for a moment her enemy was delivered into her hand. There was a murmur, which she took for assent.

"Those who have not learnt the truth of what I say, have read their Bibles to very little purpose," said Mrs. Haverstock.

"Well, ma'am," said Mrs. Ellacombe, who was so surprised at this new exposition that she forgot she was only a farmer's wife while her opponent was a colonel's "lady,"—"I have read my chapter, morning and evening, for a good many years, and I have never found that in it."

"Have you never read, 'Blessed are they that mourn?'"

"Yes, but just afterwards comes, 'for they shall be comforted.' Many and many is the time I've said that to myself, when sorrow had like to crush me to the earth," said Mrs. Ellacombe with a trembling voice.

Mrs. Haverstock did not reply. She had been rather taken aback by Mrs. Ellacombe's capping texts with her. When she quoted a text she expected acquiescence. But Edith said:—"I think we are all intended to be happy at some time or other of our lives. If we are not it is generally our own fault, or the fault of somebody."

"It is generally somebody's fault," said Mrs. Lovett.

"I think it is," said Mrs. Bontecoe with a sigh which attracted the general sympathy.

"I should say it was about half and half," said Mrs. Macfarlane with an air of impartiality. "Any way, as Mrs. Haverstock despises happiness, let's hope she'll have misery enough sent her to keep her comfortable."

"Oh, Mrs. Macfarlane!" Mrs. Ellacombe exclaimed.

"As for me," Mrs. Macfarlane continued, with an airy toss of her pretty head, "I don't like being miserable, and I'm not going to pretend that I do. I never intend to have more trouble at my heart than I can kick off with my heels."

"Bravo! My sentiments exactly," said Kate Haverstock.

"I am ashamed of you, Kate," said her mother.

But Kate, unabashed, declared that she would not be a hypocrite. She could not bear unhappiness. It was like the toothache. It made her hate everybody.

Mrs. Ellacombe looked at her with a sad smile. "I don't think you know what it is to be unhappy, yet."

"Don't I?" cried Kate. "That is what old people say; but they know nothing about it. I have been perfectly miserable. Of course, I have got over it, but that does not alter the fact."

Mrs. Lovett tittered, and observed aside to Mrs. Macgregor that it was early days for Miss Haverstock to be crossed in love.

"The man is not born, Mrs. Lovett," said Kate, "who could make me shed a tear. My misery was because I did not get the prize I was working for at school. Another girl got it. I hated the girl, but that did not give me the prize. I was so wretched I wished myself dead."

"It does not sound nice to hear you say such things," said Mrs. Bontecoe. "If you were so spiteful you had better not publish the fact."

Mrs. Haverstock closed her eyes and groaned.

"I missed getting a prize the only time I tried for one," said Mary Ellacombe. "It was hard for a little while. But I couldn't help being glad when I saw how glad the girl was who got it. Still, I was dreadfully unhappy for a little while; so I can understand how Miss Haverstock felt."

Having as it were delivered her testimony, Mary bent her head over the seam she was sewing and said no more. When she looked up Raine was entering the room, followed by Tregellas.

Tregellas was made room for by Mrs. Macgregor on the sofa. She hoped her opportunity was come to give a word of counsel to this poor young man. She gave a touch to her coral necklace, and settled her bracelets—one had slipped up, and another had slipped down, and a third had become entangled—and she smoothed down her tartan silk, and prepared herself to speak words of wisdom.

Tregellas supposed Mr. Macgregor was busy. That was the formula in Harmonia about this time.

"Yes indeed; and he has good need to be busy these hard times," was her answer, in a voice loud enough to be heard by everybody.

Tregellas remarked carelessly that he had not heard that times were particularly hard.

"When ye're a farmer, ye'll know all about it. 'Tis the farmers that know," said the lady, shaking her head.

"But there is no drought as yet," Raine remarked, edging himself into the conversation. Mary Ellacombe

was sitting not far from Mrs. Macgregor, and he wanted to get near her.

Mrs. Macgregor smiled on the young man and made room for him at the end of the sofa. What cared she that he was a lord's son? She was a Campbell, though she had stooped to mate with a Macgregor.

"If ye talk like that, ye show how little ye know of farming," she said.

"I don't pretend to know anything at all. But I hope to begin shortly to try my hand at it." And he could not forbear a glance at Mary.

"And what line d'ye think of taking?"

"H—m. Shouldn't wonder if I got a few sheep, just to begin with, don't you know. As long as one does make a beginning, it hardly matters what—does it?"

This was so hopelessly vague that a broad smile played over Mrs. Macgregor's face. Mary heard it, and blushed for pity that a young man should talk such nonsense.

Mrs. Macgregor's voice was heard again with cruel distinctness. "When ye have made up your mind what line ye'll take, then ye'll begin to understand what drought means. I can tell you, from my own calculations. We must have three good harvests to make up for one bad one, like the one we had last year. And"—she raised her voice a little more—"if it's not drought this year to ruin us, it will be something just as bad. Mr. Macgregor tells me he fears the cholera has got among his hogs. Two shotes are looking badly."

Mrs. Lovett, with the premise that she took no

interest in the farm, added that Mr. Lovett had said something of the sort yesterday.

"D'ye know if any are dead?" Mrs. Macgregor asked with tragic earnestness.

Mrs. Lovett did not know: did not want to know anything of such a sordid subject.

Mrs. Macgregor sat very upright, and spoke loud, so that she might be heard by every one present.

"If it's the real cholera, we'll have no bacon to cure for ourselves, let alone to sell. I fear I'll not be able to let you have the shote I was intending for you, Mrs. Bloss. I must wait a little and see if the sickness is going to spread. I am very frank, you see."

"Oh," cried Mrs. Bloss, "don't apologise! Any one that sends me a shote is doing me a cruel kindness. I despise shotes. We are not fixed for anything of the kind. No! If my friends love me let them send me the hog round, and I can cure it. I'm fixed all right for that. Everybody knows there's no accommodation at the rectory for raising hogs. And if there was, Mr. Bloss isn't the man to give his mind to it. He says it is 'most all he can do to attend to the spiritual concerns, and he's obliged to leave the carnal concerns to me. I reckon 'tis always so with a minister's wife, but of course a refined lady don't want to have to see to the fattening of hogs. I'm quite content with an occasional ham."

Mrs. Macgregor shook her head. "May be there won't be ham for anybody," she said.

Tregellas, feeling bored, supposed that Raine was feeling bored also, and asked him to come out and have

a smoke. Raine rose unwillingly. A minute more and he would have found a seat by Mary Ellacombe.

Edith went to see that the supper table was all right, and when she came back, Harry, who was smoking on the verandah, told her that all the ladies were pitching into their husbands, and said he hoped she would let him off gently. Raine sat outside the window with a broad grin on his face.

Mrs. Lovett was expressing her opinion of men who put their wives on an allowance. Mrs. Macgregor said if the money was the husband's he had a right to do so. If the money was the wife's, the right to allowance the husband was hers. Everybody understood that Mrs. Macgregor herself exercised that right, and wondered why Mr. Macgregor was such a fool as to submit to it.

"Well," said Mrs. Lovett, "Tom likes things comfortable, and I never met with a man who did not. What I complain of is, that he expects to be comfortable on nothing. And yet, if I'd only let him, he would half fill his cup with sugar."

Every one laughed, because that was so like a man!

"Why don't you let Mr. Lovett keep house for a week?" said Edith. "Then he would know exactly what things cost."

Mrs. Lovett replied that men were such encroaching creatures that, if once she let the reins go out of her own hands she would never get them again. There was not a husband who could be trusted to keep house for a week. Edith laughed and said her husband might keep house any day he chose. Mrs. Lovett raised her eyebrows on hearing this, and Kate promptly

inquired whether Mrs. Tregellas were kept to a strict allowance.

"No," said Edith. "We practice the mutual confidence system. When we married, my husband gave me the key of his cashbox, and kept a duplicate key. But before we reached New York he had lost his key; so that practically I am keeper of the purse. It comes to the same thing in the end."

Mrs. Lovett said it would not come to the same thing, in her case; because her husband would call her to account for every farthing she spent. And that was a thing she never would put up with. Mrs. Haverstock agreed with her.

"But," said Edith, "if a woman spends her husband's money, is it not just that she give an account of it?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Macgregor, "if the money is the husband's."

Mrs. Bloss laid down her work and took up her fan.

"I should just like to see Mr. Bloss allowance me!" she said. "If he did, I'd break the lock of his cashbox pretty quick. As long as there is money, I'm bound to have what I want."

"I'd do the same," said Kate.

"Well," said Mrs. Macfarlane with heightened colour, "I have known men real mean about money. Give their wives fans and shawls and things they didn't want, and grudge them a cent to lay out for plain things they did want. But they are not all like that. I get my allowance, but if I do exceed it once in a while there are no black looks."

Mrs. Ellacombe said that was her experience. Kate

said when it came to her turn she would try the mutual confidence system.

Mrs. Macfarlane said she preferred an allowance. There was nothing she disliked more than black looks.

"If I only imagined Mr. Macfarlane was going to be cross, I should tremble."

Mrs. Bloss laughed. "If we all took notice when husbands were cross, some of us would tremble pretty often."

"Part of a woman's duty is the putting up with a husband's temper," said Mrs. Haverstock.

"It is not a duty beyond a certain limit," said Mrs. Bontecoe sulkily. And Mrs. Lovett echoed the sentiment.

Tregellas put his head in at the window. "Will any one tell me if there is any limit to the amount of temper in a wife which it is the husband's duty to put up with?"

Mrs. Lovett gave a little shriek; Mrs. Bontecoe looked annoyed. Kate remarked that Mr. Tregellas knew how to carry the war into the enemy's country.

Tregellas looked round. "I am asking for information. Here am I, an inexperienced young married man. And here are six experienced married ladies who can each unlock the door of her private treasure-house of wisdom for my benefit. Ladies, dear ladies, tell me how many of my wife's little tempers I must put up with, and where I must draw the line."

Edith laughed merrily. "Please leave me a good margin. What is the use of living in a free country if a wife cannot have a good many little tempers?"

"Do you hear that?" said Harry in mock dismay. "She wants to have a good many of her little tempers. Ladies, where must I draw the line?"

Kate Haverstock looked at the faces of the circle of matrons, young and middle aged, and the expression she saw in them struck her as so comic, that she went out on the verandah and thence to the garden, where she sat down on a stump and laughed till she cried.

Presently her sister came to her. "What made you come out here?" she asked.

"You all looked so comical when Mr. Tregellas began about a wife's little tempers. I came out here to have a good laugh at you all."

"I consider Mr. Tregellas positively insulting," said Mrs. Bontecoe, and her voice trembled with anger.

"Oh, don't you be a fool, Flo," was Kate's reply as she rose.

"That's what you always say, of course," said Mrs. Bontecoe. "But I know Mr. Tregellas looked pointedly at me when he began talking about wives' little tempers. I know it."

Kate stole her arm round her sister's waist. "Dear, dear Flo," she murmured, "you are mistaken. I am sure you are."

"No—no, I am not," said Mrs. Bontecoe, weeping with mortification.

"Dearest Flo, he was looking at Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Bloss. Pray, pray don't imagine things. You are wrong, indeed you are, Flo. My eyes are as sharp as

yours, and I saw in what direction he was looking. You really are too sensitive."

"Sensitive? I know I am. I feel sometimes as if I were skinned. I am the most miserable woman alive, I do believe," cried Mrs. Bontecoe, sinking down on the seat from which Kate had risen.

"Oh, Flo! you are happy enough sometimes," said Kate reproachfully. "And dear old dad is so fond of you!"

"Happy? Since I knew Rupert Bontecoe I have forgotten what happiness means," Mrs. Bontecoe cried. "Happy! I'm not happy even when I am asleep. Either I dream that Rupert is kissing me, or else that he is quarrelling with me."

"Flo," Kate whispered, "what if you were to go back?"

It was not the first time Kate had made that suggestion.

"What! and separate again in another six months? No. The last state of things would be worse than the first," said the elder sister with a bitter laugh.

Kate said nothing more. She was accustomed to these outpourings, and blamed her sister and sympathised with her by turns. They returned slowly to the house. Mrs. Bloss had dropped her work once more, and was fanning herself with her eyes closed. Mrs. Ellacombe was still busy. Mary Ellacombe and Mr. Raine were not to be seen, and Edith was folding up the work which had been finished.

Mary had asked permission to look after the junket. Young Raine had jumped up to open the door of the

sitting-room for her, and had followed her into the dining-room, asking whether he could not help. Mary had replied that there was nothing to help about; she was only going to see whether the junket was ready.

"Junket? that is a west-country dish, is it not?" said Raine.

"Yes. We are Devonshire people, you know," said Mary.

"And did you really make this, Miss Ellacombe? Do you know you are awfully clever," said Raine.

"There is not much cleverness in it when one knows how," said Mary blushing. She was not used to be complimented, and she hardly knew whether Mr. Raine was laughing at her or not. At this rate, he would be complimenting her next for making up pats of butter!

"I wanted so much to ask you whether you agreed with what those people were saying, but I had not a chance of speaking a word. Awful nuisance, don't you think?—when one can't get near the person one—one wants to speak to?"

"Yes, I suppose it is. But you could not have had anything of importance to say, Mr. Raine."

"I don't know that. I wanted your opinion."

"What about?" said Mary innocently.

"I wanted to know, for instance, whether you approve of an allowance, or whether you would go in for the mutual confidence system;—in matrimony, I mean."

"I have never thought about it," said Mary, with a blush that spread from her forehead down to her throat.

"But do think, please. That is, if it does not bore you quite too awfully."

"I—I should say that if people were truly attached to each other, the mutual confidence system would be best, and if people don't care for each other an allowance is best."

"That is exactly my view, Miss Ellacombe. It all depends on the people, does it not?"

"Certainly," said Mary.

"And—what did you think of what they were saying about putting up with tempers? Ladies' tempers and husbands' tempers, don't you know?"

"Mother didn't say anything," said Mary, "but I know what she was thinking. I've heard her say it to neighbours."

"Do tell me. I am sure it was something wise," said Raine.

"She said once, when a neighbour was complaining, 'Let us find out the limit of God's endurance.'"

Raine considered for a moment. "That is true of course, when one comes to think of it. But it would never have occurred to me. It's an awfully serious way of putting things, isn't it?"

"Enduring one's own burdens and taking up other people's burdens is very serious work," said Mary. "I don't suppose it has ever been in your way."

"Of course not! How should it? I have always done pretty much as I have liked—as much as a younger son can, that is. A younger son's tether is not a long one. But there is one thing I should like awfully I wonder if you know what it is, Miss Ellacombe?"

"That is not likely," said Mary. "But I'll wish you well, as we west-country folk say, if it is a good thing for you to have."

"Oh, there's not a doubt as to that," said Raine, feeling much encouraged. He hesitated. Was it too soon to speak? His father had not yet answered his proposal to try farming. He was quite alive to the fact that there would probably be difficulties in the way. There always were difficulties when it was a question of furnishing more money. But he thought, as every young man does think, and will think to the end of the world, that if the beloved one could be induced to smile, the difficulties would smooth themselves—somehow.

"Do you really wish me well, Miss Ellacombe?" he said, coming a little nearer. His heart was beginning to beat as it had not beaten since a certain evil day at Harrow when he and the headmaster had a private interview, which however does not come within the scope of this history.

"Why, of course I do. I wish well to everybody," said Mary, quite unconscious of the chilling import of her words. She was busy putting spoonfuls of thick cream all over the top of the junket, and was feeling anxious lest there should not be quite enough.

"Everybody?—Oh——" Raine began.

"I hope the junket is a success, Mary," said Mrs. Tregellas, coming in.

"I hope it is," said Mary. "Only milk behaves so differently in this country from what it does at home. And really I ought to have brought a little more cream. I am so sorry."

"Oh, it looks lovely! It makes me think of Dartmoor and picnics,—and—all sorts of pleasant things," said Edith, with her brightest smile.

"I am so glad!" Mary did not see how Raine turned away in a huff and went out on the verandah.

The ladies came in, some alert, some languid, Mrs. Bloss remarking plaintively that Mr. Bloss was very late, and that her neuralgia was always worse for night air.

"Neuralgia!" cried Harry. "I'll prescribe for you. Some cold chicken, to begin with. Then a glass of iced punch. Then——"

"Ice! Where did you get the ice, Mr. Tregellas?" Mrs. Macgregor asked. Mrs. Macgregor had a way of putting the most dauntless questions in the most matter-of-fact way.

Harry looked at her. "I got it at the hotel."

"Of course ye did! I never thought of that," said Mrs. Macgregor. "When ye said 'iced punch,' I wondered——"

"I got the bottle of rum there too, if you wish to know."

"Boniface keeps good rum," said Mrs. Macgregor, not one whit abashed; "at least, so Mr. Macgregor says. *I* don't know of course how it may be."

"Try it!" said Harry.

"Oh!" Mrs. Macgregor murmured, "so early in the evening."

But when she saw Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Haverstock both sipping, she thought it was perhaps not so early, and took her glass. She would have abstained from

punch, or any other good thing, for a lifetime, and would not have murmured; but when others were getting their share, she felt that her duty to herself required that she should get her share too.

Before they had risen from the table wheels were heard approaching, and presently Mr. Bloss entered.

"Well, Mr. Bloss, I've been expecting you for the last hour," was Mrs. Bloss's salutation.

Edith made room for him by her side, and the other married ladies—with the exception of the Haverstock party—all lending a helping hand, the Reverend Josiah speedily found himself abundantly supplied with the victuals that his soul loved. Women, no matter what their church or denomination, do dearly love to feed their shepherd, even as the shepherd loves to be fed.

"Ladies, you overwhelm me!" Mr. Bloss exclaimed, surveying the viands before him. "Mrs. Haverstock, I hope I see you well."

Mrs. Haverstock replied stiffly that she was as well as usual. And Mrs. Bloss turned red and looked at Mrs. Haverstock—as Mrs. Macfarlane said afterwards—as if she were spoiling for a fight.

"A glass of punch, Mr. Bloss," said Harry, ladling out one from the china bowl.

Mr. Bloss's hands went up in deprecation and dismay.

"Punch! Oh really, I don't know what to say to that."

"It is iced," said Mrs. Macgregor, handing him the glass.

"Iced?" said Mr. Bloss. "But—really—the fact is

—the Council has ordered special sermons against intemperance—so I——"

"You might drink the whole of this and not be the worse for it; it is ladies' punch," said Harry.

"Ladies' punch, eh?" Mr. Bloss took the glass from Mrs. Macgregor's hand and looked askance at it.

"Ye'll not find a headache in that," said Mrs. Macgregor. If she had brewed it she would have made it stronger. So would Mrs. Lovett.

"Well—well—well," said Mr. Bloss. "For once in a way, I suppose,—just once in a way."

"If no one ever took anything stronger than that," said Harry, "there would not be much need of preaching in favour of temperance."

Thus encouraged, Mr. Bloss swallowed his glass, and then had another to keep the chilly night air out, and then a third, to keep the custard company. Then he rose, closed his eyes and said grace, and the company rose too, feeling that that was a general dismissal.

Mrs. Haverstock took her departure while the other ladies were saying last words to each other, having disposed of her tracts by hiding them inside the bonnets which lay on Edith's bed, and in Harry's boots and shoes. Let us not chronicle what Harry said when he found them.

Their guests had departed, when Edith bethought herself of young Raine. She supposed he had felt bored and had slipped away. Feeling tired and headachy, she went a little way from the house to breathe the fresh evening air, accompanied by Harry. They were strolling on slowly, he with his arm round her

waist, when Harry, who had not lost his sailor habit of scanning the horizon, withdrew his arm, saying, "There is Raine, by Jove!—looking as if he had the toothache."

"Poor fellow! Ask him to come in, and I will get him something for it," said Edith, turning back to the house.

Harry called, and Raine came forward slowly, with a very woebegone look.

"What's up?" said Harry.

Raine stammered, blushed, and confessed to a headache. Harry suggested a glass of punch.

"No—no—I'd rather not," said Raine hesitating. "I've knocked off all that."

"All right," said Harry. "Mrs. Tregellas will give you a cup of tea if you will come in."

Raine murmured that he must be going; it was getting late; but Harry insisted on his coming in. There would be tea presently. And truly, there was a little tea-table set in a corner, and the lamp lighted, and a bottle of camphor ready for the toothache, if wanted. Everything looked cosy and homelike, Raine thought, and he murmured that Mrs. Tregellas was quite too awfully kind. Edith, seeing that there was a cloud on his face—debt or drinking she thought would account for it rather than toothache—set herself to talk pleasantly, and seconded her husband when he proposed a little later that Raine should stay the night. There would be no one sitting up for him, he said pleasantly.

"No; I don't suppose any one would ever care enough for me, to sit up for me," Raine said. "I don't

suppose there is a soul since my mother died that would care whether I went to the bad or not."

"You must not think yourself so friendless as all that," said Edith gently. And Harry told him he was in the blues, and bade him come out of them, and not set himself up as a blighted being at his time of life.

But, when he returned to his wife, after Raine had been shown to his room, Harry asked her seriously to take the trouble to be kind to the young fellow. What was the matter with him he did not know; it might be debt, or it might be liver, or it might be a threatened attack of delirium tremens. But, at any rate, he was just in the state to go and have a drinking bout if he went back to Harmonia.

"One can't help shepherding the fellow, don't you see. There's something wrong with him. Perhaps he is in love—calf love—of course; still, it's like the tooth-ache—pretty bad while you've got it. So, my dear, if you don't mind——"

Edith protested she never minded being kind to any one; especially any one in whom Harry felt interested.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTERS FROM HOME.

NEXT morning Raine seemed to have recovered his cheerfulness. Tregellas bade him stay as long as he pleased, and make himself at home. He would be away in the woods all the morning, helping the negroes who were clearing some of his woodland. Raine said he would come down and see what Tregellas was doing, but he must write some letters first.

When Edith had finished her morning duties, she found Raine seated at her writing-table with a litter of torn paper round him. He looked up at her and then at the torn scraps, and said ruefully,—

"Awful work, having to write letters. Don't you think so?"

"I never find it so," said Edith.

"Ladies are always better at letterwriting than men are, I believe. It is very difficult, though, when one wants to say everything."

"Why not leave something for next time?"

"Ah, but this is not a common letter."

Edith smiled. She thought she understood now

Raine's doleful condition of the night before. But who was the young lady? Kate's name occurred to her; but she remembered immediately that Raine had been in the dining-room with Mary Ellacombe, and that shortly after he had disappeared and she had supposed he was gone. Probably, then, he had made love to Mary and Mary had snubbed him. Now, without having any particular prejudice against Raine, Edith believed him to be worthless: as worthless as Mary was good. Therefore she hoped that Mary had snubbed him.

Raine looked at the sheet before him, hesitated a moment, and then tore it up and threw it down with the rest of the torn sheets, muttering, "It's no go." Then he asked Edith how long she had known the Ellacombes. Edith said she had only become acquainted with them since she came to Harmonia.

"Mrs. Ellacombe seemed to know you well."

Edith laughed. "Her husband's grandfather had been a tenant of my grandfather de Glanvile. She knew a great deal more about me than I did about her. My grandfather ruined himself with electioneering, and the estate passed into other hands."

"I see. But you are friends, are you not? I saw you kiss Ma—Miss Ellacombe when she went away. But ladies are so strange!"

"How are they strange?"

"They call each other 'dear,' and kiss, and then they talk behind backs of 'that hateful creature.' I know," said Raine nodding. "I've heard my sisters go on like that."

"How should you know that I kissed Miss Ellacombe?"

"I happened to see you."

"I supposed you were gone then. You must have been behind that big tree."

"I didn't care to see her—that is, I didn't want her to see me just then," Raine said, looking confused.

Of course Edith knew as well as if she had been told, what must have happened. There could not be a doubt that Raine had had his snubbing. And what a wise girl Mary was! Some farmers' daughters would have felt honoured to exchange a word with an honourable.

"I think the Ellacombes are very genuine people," said Edith. "And genuineness is so rare that one prizes it whenever one sees it. And they are warm-hearted, and besides that they are west-country folk. I will confess to you that, as a Devonshire woman, I have a liking for the west-country speech I was accustomed to hear in my childhood. Mrs. Ellacombe reminds me of one or two good old farmers' wives in my father's parish. To hear her talk takes me back into the atmosphere of Dartmoor, and makes me remember many trivial things and people, which I won't bore you by talking about. Some possessions, you know, are of no value to any one except the owner."

"I understand that," said Raine.

"At the same time, I am fully aware that, had I remained in England, I should never have known Mrs. Ellacombe either as a neighbour or as a friend. I should have simply made my friends in the sphere in which I was born, and she would have remained in her

sphere. I should have missed knowing a good woman, it is true; but *en revanche*, I should have known other good women in my own station. I do not suppose all farmers' wives are as wise, or as upright, or as free from innate vulgarity, as good Mrs. Ellacombe; any more than I suppose all great ladies to be beautiful and accomplished and well bred."

"Then if you were living at home you would not know the Ellacombes? You would not ask them to dinner, for instance?" said Raine.

"You must know as well as I do that people in our station do not invite farmers and farmers' wives to dinner parties."

"Well, I do know it, of course," said Raine. "When one comes to look at it, it seems an awful shame though."

"Look at it again, and perhaps you will take a different view. Can you imagine Mr. Ellacombe—good old man as he is—at his ease in the drawing-room of—we'll say the lord-lieutenant? Or Mrs. Ellacombe? Or Miss Ellacombe either? They would all three feel as if transported to another planet; whereas you and I should be quite comfortable."

"I am sure that Miss Ellacombe would grace any position whatever," said Raine defiantly.

"Miss Ellacombe will, I think and hope, make an excellent farmer's wife. And I do not think she will grace any other position," said Edith. "She is neither well-educated enough, nor accomplished enough."

"How hard women are to each other!" cried

Raine. "And you kissed her as if you were quite fond of her!"

"I am fond of her for the goodness of heart which she possesses, not for the accomplishments which she does not possess. And all my fondness will never fit her to be the wife of an English country gentleman."

Raine murmured that there were other people besides English country gentlemen.

"I should be glad," Edith went on, "to see Miss Ellacombe married to some young man in her own class, equal in worth to her good old father. I have seen no one good enough for her yet; but she is young, and Harmonia is young, and she can wait. Harmonia will fill up in time, no doubt."

Raine rose and walked up and down the room. "I don't agree with you at all," he cried. "Mary is a girl who would grace any position. Mary a farmer's wife, indeed!—And you talk of accomplishments!—Why, look at my sisters. They are not one bit accomplished. As to education, I say she is quite educated enough for—for anything. What is the good of such a lot of education, after all?"

Edith bent her head to hide a smile. "You seem interested in Miss Ellacombe," she said.

Raine threw himself down on the sofa and hid his face. "Oh, Mrs. Tregellas," he groaned, "I am the most miserable beggar that ever was born. I love the very ground she treads on. She is the most angelic creature I ever beheld—the sweetest—the loveliest."

"She is very pretty, certainly," said Edith.

"Pretty? You call that pretty? Why she is lovelier than anything I ever saw in a picture." He jumped up and began walking about with his hands in his pockets. "If I were in my eldest brother's shoes, I would ask her to marry me this very day; and I would keep on asking till she said 'yes.' I'd make her the future Lady Raine, by Jove!"

"But, things being as they are, you will refrain from asking?"

"Ah, there's the rub! My father allows me a hundred a year. Now, I ask you, what is a fellow to do with that? I have written to ask him to let me have some money to try my hand at farming. But there are such a lot of us, and he has so little! Lost a pot of money in Canadian railways a long time ago, and has been struggling ever since. I suppose he can't help himself, but still, it's discouraging for a fellow, isn't it?"

"I see," said Edith.

"It looks bad, my not getting an answer, don't you think?" Edith suggested that perhaps Lord Raine had other views; but Raine said he did not see how that could be, because he had been sent out on the understanding that he was to look about him. "There are such a lot of us! There are three of my brothers who would make first-rate gamekeepers, but they are fit for nothing else. It is a pity a nobleman's son cannot turn gamekeeper."

"It could hardly be done in England."

"Of course not. And yet, what is a fellow to do?" cried Raine, throwing out his big, strong arms. "I think it would have been a good thing for me if I had

been apprenticed to a blacksmith. At Harrow I could throw any fellow almost. Now, I'm all out of training. I do believe I might have been a very fair blacksmith's apprentice."

"You might have turned out an idle apprentice."

"Oh no, when I make up my mind to do anything, I always do it."

"What did you do at Harrow?" Edith asked.

Raine laughed. "You had me there. Well, I was never quite at the bottom of my form, and I was never at the top. Books never were in my line. I don't even care to read a paper, unless it is the *Field*."

"As you have told me of your wish to farm," said Edith, "may I tell you that a farmer in the present day cannot afford to be an ignorant man."

"He does not want to know Greek and Latin and all that bosh."

"But he requires to know something of science."

"Oh, I know. Agricultural chemistry and that sort of thing," said Raine. "I could mug that up fast enough if it was necessary. But what's the good, if I don't know that I shall want it."

"As to that," Edith said, "you must be the best judge."

Raine, who appeared to have said all he had to say, rose and proposed a stroll to see what Tregellas was doing.

The English mail came in three times a week, and as Edith was expecting the boy with her letters she declined accompanying Raine. There was in truth little to recommend him to ladies' society. He was deficient even in the small talk of the society man. He

had, perhaps, a good heart; perhaps, he was not ill-meaning. Perhaps, if he chose to take off his coat and work, he might one day earn his bread. That was the best that could be said of him. As for this ridiculous falling in love, he might not be the first, and he assuredly would not be the last, who would fall in love with Mary Ellacombe's pretty face.

Edith sat at home and thought of this vaguely as she worked, till the arrival of her letters, which supplied her with topics of greater interest. One was from her Aunt Elizabeth, one was from an old nurse, and the third was addressed to her husband in a handwriting she did not know.

Edith opened her aunt's letter first. She smiled as she read it. Her Aunt Elizabeth wanted to know so many things, and had so little idea of what her life at Harmonia was like! Had dear Edith made any nice acquaintances? Were there nice drives in her neighbourhood? Had Mr. Tregellas begun to make money yet? "I feel older since you went, my dear," wrote the kind woman, "and so does Rachel, though she would not say so for the world. Your room is kept ready as if you might come back any day, and Rachel found a little drawing of yours that was put away half finished, and she has had it mounted on an easel frame, and keeps it on a table in her room, where she can see it when she sits down to read her Bible."

Edith's eyes moistened a little as she read this. She had never supposed that her Aunt Rachel would allow herself to be sentimental. After all, she thought, she had perhaps not done her aunt full justice. Edith felt

sorry, but not very sorry. She was too young, her life was too full of hope as yet, for her to sit down and calmly mete out a full measure of justice to an elderly aunt who would have liked to prevent her marriage with Harry.

From her aunt's letter Edith turned to the other, which bore the postmark of a little Cornish town on the banks of the Tamar, where her old nurse Eliza lived. A few words must be said about this woman, who was one of the best—if not *the* best—woman who ever lived. She had been nurse to Harry Tregellas when he was a child, before she entered the household of the Reverend John de Glanvile; and long before Harry and Edith knew each other, she spoke of them as her children, and wondered what might happen if they did meet. Just before Edith's father went abroad, she had married an old sailor, who had been for years a *factotum* to Admiral Tregellas. Thomas Rosevear had had Eliza Canter in his mind for many years, and they had begun to keep company in a quiet way. They had agreed that when they had each saved a certain sum of money, and when any great change took place in the families whom they served, they would, in Eliza's delicate phrase, "think about it." When the admiral died, and Mr. de Glanvile was going abroad for his health, it seemed both to Thomas and to Eliza that it was a good time to "think about it."

Such a treasure as Eliza could not be allowed to go forth unfurnished. Mr. de Glanvile gave her a fine pig, and Mrs. de Glanvile gave her a Paisley shawl to be married in, and Edith gave her a prayer-book, and

rehearsed the office of Holy Matrimony to her up in the nursery, for Eliza was nervous and tearful when the great day came, and was afraid she might say or do something that was not set down in the book, with disastrous consequences to herself, to say nothing of putting the parson out. But when she appeared in the parlour to have a kind last word from her mistress, dressed in her Leghorn bonnet and satin ribbons, her grey silk, and her Paisley shawl pinned to her shoulders and almost trailing on the ground, she looked like the personification of respectability and worth. And when she heard that in addition to other gear she was to have the second best bed hung with chintz, and the cuckoo clock that stood in the hall, she felt that she must indeed keep up her heart and go through with it.

What with the happy sailor knack of the one, and the wise economy of the other, the two had prospered steadily. From small beginnings, such as the renting of an acre of ground on which to grow cabbages, Thomas had advanced to the dignity of a cottage of his own with ground attached, and Eliza had a dairy of nine cows to manage, and supplied Devonshire cream all the summer long to picnics and strawberry parties. When Edith and Tregellas were married they went to spend a day with their old servants, and Edith was kissed and blessed and wept over, so that at last Thomas said he felt ashamed, because it looked as if Eliza had made a bad venture herself when she tried matrimony.

Edith opened the letter with a smile, but her face was sad before she had finished reading it.

"My ever dear Miss Edith—" Eliza wrote—"I write this hoping it will find you well, as it leaves us at present. Since you went away from here Miss Edy my dear, the Lord hath laid His hand heavy on this neighbourhood. He hath spared the folk that they may repent, but He has sent the plague of Egypt on they pore beastesses, such a murrain as was never heared tell of. Dear Missey though Madam I should say but you always was my Missey dear, you know the Lord had blessed us every way, and it seemed like Thomas only put his hand to a thing and it prospered. We had money in the bank, and thought to be cumfble in our old age and I paid for my sitting in chapel and had my shilling ready for the missionary plate. And perhaps I was puffed up but it don't seem like I was, and I put my sister's youngest boy to school and when they was all down in the fever Mary Ann and all of them was looking to me, cause they could not go dredging nor picking cockles, and there was nothing in the house. My dearest Missey that was, the murrain is among the beastesses and my man most broke down, being up day and night tending 'em and burying one after the other in a corner of the field, the one with the big horse chestnut right in the middle of it. Theym dead and buried my dear, and there our money lies, and when it came to the last one I thought my man would turn his face to the wall like Hezekiah. She was a Jersey heifer, and Thomas had took money out of the bank to pay for her only a week before the murrain began. And I suppose it was the Lord's will, and I called her Edy and no offence to you dear

Miss, and I hope it won't be unlucky but I never did think much of signs myself and we are all in the Lord's hands. And this minds me to tell you my man and me have both got grey since this trouble came upon us.

"Thomas says I can't steer straight to save my life but if I didn't begin at the beginning how was you to understand ?

"Dear Missey, the pore beastesses is dead and gone, pore dears, and we'm behindhand with the world now, making no way at all and just drifting, Thomas says. He is afeard to run the risk of buying any more cows, for the murrain is running up and down the country and all the farmers be afeard as well they may, and parson bin putting up prayers in church for to spare the cattle if so be the Lord will, and there be so many rules and regulations sent out by guvment that Thomas says it ain't safe for a man to take a short cut across the fields and theyve padlocked the gates all the way from St. Stephens to St. Dominic.

"My dear we've bin forced to leave our home and sell some of our furniture, but not the things dear Missus give me when I was married, and we had to take money out of the bank to pay last quarter's rent for the field, and my man is whisht like, and sayeth if things goes on like they have been we'll be on the parish in our old age and that would break his heart and mine too, though it might be the Lord's will for all that, and Thomas that has been a ratepayer all these years and never behindhand.

"Dear Miss as you have been out in forrin parts

might I make bold to ask if you think my man and me could make a living out there, and if it is true there is no such murrain in that country. We have enough money left to bring us out, and a trifle over, Thomas says. We'm a little old for hemigrating, but Thomas is so handy with his hands and I like wise can put my hand to anything. And Thomas begs his humbel duty to master, and would take it kind if master could give him his bearings, like.—And so no more from your affectionat servant till deth,

"ELIZA ROSEVEAR.

"Dear Mam, some do say they pore beastesses was pixylaid, but I cannot make up my mind to it. The preacher said last Sunday twas a judgment, and so did Mr. Coad our class leader, but there is a woman down to St. Dominic says she seen the pixies, so I do not know what to think."

When Tregellas came in Edith gave him the letter to read. "Oh!" she cried, with tears in her eyes, "I never wished to be rich before. But now—how happy should I be could we send for both these dear creatures! And I would not have dear Eliza come as a steerage passenger; she is too respectable for that." Then she kissed her husband, lest he should suppose she was regretting having married such a poor man. "They say they still have a little money. Won't you write at once and tell Thomas to come?"

But Tregellas said he could never give advice in a hurry. He must think first, and show the letter to Mr. Ellacombe and take his advice. He lit his pipe and

seemed to be in a brown study over the letter, and it was not till some little time after, that Edith remembered to give him the letter addressed to him.

It was from a young man who had been a playmate and schoolfellow of Harry's. His name was Robert Trelease. Harry had gone into the navy and Trelease had entered the Church, and they had not met for years. Harry had felt disgusted when he heard that his schoolfriend had taken orders, and had declared that there was a good fellow spoilt. The letter he received now was not calculated to make him alter his opinion. There was an expression of contempt on his face as he passed the letter to his wife after reading it.

Trelease informed him that he had resigned his curacy, and that he was coming to America for a time to look about him, and would be glad to take advantage of his friend's experience. He had just enough to keep him in a frugal way; and having been born and brought up in the country he thought that perhaps he might manage a little farming in America. The letter concluded thus:—

"I have, however, decided on nothing, except that I will not take another curacy. My mind has been so harassed by doubts for more than a year, that my position has become quite painful. I shall be glad to be so situated as to leave all vexed questions behind me for a time. Perhaps the complete change which I have in contemplation may bring somewhat of lucidity to the present muddle."

Edith read the letter and said, "Poor fellow!"

"Miserable ass!" Tregellas growled in response.

Edith asked why.

"Because," Tregellas said, "a man should know his own mind before he enters the Church. I detest 'backing and filling.'"

"Perhaps he could not help it."

"But a man ought to help it." He looked at the letter again.

"Lucidity! Pshaw, what the fellow wants is common sense."

"He may have been crossed in love."

"He does not say a word of that."

"I read it between the lines."

Tregellas read the letter through once more, and declared he could see nothing of the sort. (Edith however was right. Trelease had been cruelly jilted by his rector's daughter, and was feeling it keenly then, though afterwards he found that it was the best thing that could have happened to him.)

"Well," said Tregellas, "even if a man has been crossed in love, that is no reason for his deserting his post. I dare say he has been destroying the coats of his stomach by drinking green tea, or else fasting and wearing a hair shirt or some such tomfoolery."

"Harry dear," said Edith, "what should you have done had you been crossed in love?"

"Done? Volunteered for the next Arctic expedition, or made love to some other girl. One thing I know I would not have done; I would not have left the navy—You bet!—"

"I suppose you will ask him here?"

"Of course. He is welcome to make my house his

headquarters while he is looking about. But who would have said that Bob Trelease would enter the Church, or that, once having entered, he would leave it? It's desertion, Edith, that's the long and short of it."

"Oh, that is too hard a name. You will advise him, won't you, Harry?"

"No, that I will not," said Tregellas. "It is all I can do to steer straight myself. I won't steer another man's boat, not if he were my dearest friend."

Raine went away in the evening, saying that he hoped to find letters awaiting him at the hotel. Tregellas bade him come down whenever he felt dull, and Edith found herself obliged to echo her husband's invitation.

Raine pressed her hand as he bade her adieu, and asked whether it would bore her "quite too awfully" if he came to have a talk with her now and then. Edith could not but reply politely, but she was determined that, if she could help it, he should never meet Mary Ellacombe at her house.

Tregellas told Mr. Ellacombe of the two letters he had received, each requesting advice. Mr. Ellacombe shook his head and pursed up his lips, when he read Trelease's letter. He did not wish to say a word against the Establishment, and he had known godly men who were curates. But—

"It takes better than a fule to farm, indeed it does, Mr. Tregellas," he said with a slow shake of his head. But when he had read Mrs. Rosevear's letter, he struck his hand on the table, and declared that these were the people who would build up Harmonia.

"It ain't ladies and gentlemen—excuse me, sir,—that

can make a place like this; it's the working folk that can live hard, and put their hand to anything, like this good woman and her husband. Ladies want their little comforts, and gentlemen want them too, and they can't tuck up their sleeves and turn to with a will. The working folk have the pull of all of us, when it comes to real hard work. There's my missus now. She's always done her own dairy work, and she's a light hand at pastry and the like. But what would she say if she had to do her own washing! She'd break down in an hour, she would. But the working people have learnt to endure hardness. If there's any flabbiness about them, they go under, and there's an end of 'em."

"I don't think there is much flabbiness among us," said Tregellas.

"There's no moral flabbiness, if I may make so bold, sir. But what would your good lady say if she had to do a day's washing?"

"You bet she would do it without a grumble."

"And it would go nigh to kill her, most like. And it would make you feel bad to see her at it. Of course it would!—But a working-man thinks no more of his missus doing a day's washing than you do of your good lady pouring you out a cup of tea out of your silver tea-pot. And why should he? 'Tis all in the natural day's work, so to speak."

When Mr. Ellacombe heard moreover that Thomas and Eliza Rosevear were teetotallers in fact though not in name, he became eager that they should come

out and settle there, and be a good example to Harmonia. For there had been a good deal of roystering of late, and a paragraph had appeared in the *Jonesville Mugwump* to the effect that Harmonia was a settlement for drunken Englishmen, and Mr. Ellacombe's feelings had been a good deal hurt by it; because, when one came to statistics, there were five whisky saloons in Jonesville for one in Harmonia. He talked of writing a letter of remonstrance to the editor, but Tregellas advised him to leave the editor alone; and went home to write his own letters.

Raine kept his promise to come down and talk to Edith about his affairs, and Edith began to wish heartily that he would take his demands for sympathy elsewhere. Lord Raine had at length answered his son's letter; and the answer was an affirmative burdened with many conditions. He was to enter an agricultural college in some part of the United States; to remain there as student for at least a year; and at the end of that time produce proofs that the year had been profitably spent. Besides this, he was to give his word of honour to give up low habits and low associates. The tone of the letter—which Edith read unwillingly because she was asked—was not that of a father who expected any great achievement from his son. It was cold, business-like, and there seemed to Edith to be an undercurrent of disappointment in it. Still, it was plain and straightforward, and perhaps offered the young man as much as he had any right to expect. Edith told him so.

"But suppose some other fellow cuts me out when I am at college, hundreds of miles away?" said Raine.

Edith suggested that he must take his chance like every other man.

Then Raine unfolded a plan to Edith, which he thought a great improvement on his father's. He would board somewhere in the neighbourhood as a farm pupil, which would be of more use than if he were in a northern state like Michigan or Illinois, where, of course, only northern methods were taught. And if he were in the neighbourhood he would have the chance now and then of seeing Mary.

"If I were hundreds of miles away, and thought some fellow was making up to Mary, and I couldn't even punch his head, I should be ready to do something rash. I know I couldn't work, in that case," said Raine.

Edith laughed, and bade him not talk like a schoolboy.

Raine blushed. "Ah, Mrs. Tregellas, you may laugh; but it is no laughing matter to me. If I could but make sure of her feelings! But sometimes she is such an icicle that I feel fit to hang myself. And when I've been there, sometimes I don't see her at all. I believe her mother hides her away. I wish I had the chance of seeing her here now and then."

"There is really very little visiting on either side," said Edith. And Raine understood that he could not ask for help in that direction. He walked up and down the room and sat down first on one chair and then

on another, and at last blurted out another plan. What if he went to old Ellacombe himself and asked him to take him as a farm pupil ?

Edith could only say that he must ask. She did not know whether the Ellacombes chose to take boarders. But even if they did, she bade him remember that it was quite as likely as not that Mary would have nothing to say to him.

All the backbone was gone out of Raine at once. He sank down on the sofa a nerveless heap, and wiped his brow.

"There is some fellow making up to Mary ! Is that what you mean ?"

"Indeed, I know of none," said Edith. It was all very absurd, but she could not help feeling a little sorry when she saw the young man turn pale. "But you yourself said that she was an icicle."

"So she is," said Raine, sighing heavily.

"I am sure of this, Mr. Raine. If she does not love you, nothing will make her marry you."

"O that I were a rich man !" Raine ejaculated.

"Riches will never win Mary Ellacombe."

"Well, if she won't have anything to say to me, I shall go to the dogs."

"Pray do not say that. Where would the heroes be, if men let their courage fail under prospective defeat ?"

"But I don't pretend to be a hero. If it were a question of fisticuffs, I'd go in and win, very likely. But this is such a different thing !"

The least Edith could do was to bid him keep up his heart. But as she spoke the words she felt herself a hypocrite; for the more she saw of Raine, the less she liked him as a prospective husband for such a girl as Mary Ellacombe.

CHAPTER XV.

COUSIN GEORGE.

When Mrs. Ellacombe heard from her husband that he had accepted Raine as a farm pupil, she was struck dumb with astonishment. Mr. Ellacombe had been seated at his desk when he made the announcement, and he had expected the usual wifely acquiescence. As no word of answer came he looked up, and in his turn was astonished. Instead of the smiling, placid countenance with which Mrs. Ellacombe met the small ups and downs of daily life, there was a countenance full of perplexity.

"Why, does it go against 'ee?" he inquired. "Whatever is the matter with 'ee, Betsey?"

She answered with some hesitation,—"Gentlemen like Mr. Raine do expect so much! I don't see how I'm to do for him."

"What should there be to do?" Mr. Ellacombe inquired with mild, masculine obtuseness. "We eat and drink three times a day. We should do the same whether the young man were here or not. There will be another bed to make, and a bigger loaf to

bake. But that need not make much ado in the house."

"An extra person always makes extra work."

"Well, my dear, I am sure that Mary is always ready to help. As handy a little maid as ever was seen, say I."

Mrs. Ellacombe fired up directly. "Mr. Ellacombe, I won't have Mary waiting upon Mr. Raine."

"I don't want Mary to wait on Mr. Raine. I only said, there she was if you wanted help."

Mrs. Ellacombe was silent for a moment, and during that moment she turned many things over in her mind. Then she asked whether it was a settled thing that Mr. Raine was coming.

Mr. Ellacombe replied that it was: and added, that a good many women would think it an advantage to have some one occupying the spare room.

Mrs. Ellacombe rejoined that under some circumstances she too might feel it an advantage.

"If he were a decent, steady young man, instead of belonging to that idle, drinking set ——"

"Now there it is!" cried Mr. Ellacombe. "He wants to break with that lot. I look upon his application to me as an instance of the direct guidance of Providence. And he asked it as a favour—as a favour—that I should take him as a farm pupil."

"He got on your blind side, that's what he did. And one of these days he'll be bringing liquor into the house and ——"

"No, Betsey. I told him that the accursed thing should not pass my threshold, and he gave me his word of honour as a gentleman——"

"That means till next time, I suppose——"

"Betsey," said Mr. Ellacombe with a puzzled look, "one would say you were unwilling to help me to snatch this young man's soul as a brand from the burning. You do not seem to see the leadings of Providence as I do."

Mrs. Ellacombe sighed. "Well," she said, letting a little bit of her secret mind peep out, just to see how her husband would take it,—"I was thinking of Mary, Mr. Ellacombe, and that's the truth."

Any woman would have understood at once. Mr. Ellacombe, being endowed with reason but devoid of instinct, thought that his wife was making foolish excuses. "Mary?"—he said, "Mary?—What's to do about Mary?"

"She's growing up."

Mr. Ellacombe considered. "Seems to me she's pretty much of a child yet. 'Twas but the other day she was playing with her doll."

"She isn't so much of a child that she and Mr. Raine mightn't—mightn't get friendly together," said Mrs. Ellacombe at her wits' end.

"Well, I am quite sure that young Raine will never learn anything but good from Mary," said Mr. Ellacombe.

Mrs. Ellacombe almost groaned. What more could she say? How was it possible for a man to be so obtuse? Was it to be expected that she, the mother of such a shy, shrinking maid as Mary, should discuss in cold blood the possibility of her falling in love with this one or that one?

"I wasn't thinking of Mr. Raine at all," she said.

"But I do think of him," Mr. Ellacombe insisted. "Here is an opportunity of doing good that comes in my way. Shall I step aside? Shall I thrust it from me? I dare not, Betsey. How do I know that this young man's soul may not be required of me one day, if I refuse the present responsibility? One never ought to shirk a responsibility which appears to be thrust upon one. I take it that that is the Lord's way of giving a command."

Mrs. Ellacombe sighed. "If you put it in that way, Mr. Ellacombe, I have no more to say. I must hope for the best."

"I have never gone wrong yet from having followed the leadings of Providence," said her husband. And he began to busy himself with his accounts, as though he had said the last word that could be said on the subject.

Mrs. Ellacombe, indeed, was unable to make any farther rejoinder. The tears were in her eyes, and there was a tightening in her throat. She was irritated, anxious, afraid; besides being vexed as any married woman might be, at having a new inmate brought into the household without her good leave being asked. She betook herself to the quietest corner of the house, the dairy; and in its cool shade began to work up the last churning of butter as an outlet for her irritation.

"Why," she asked herself, as her practical hands shaped the butter into delicate pats,—"why had not a man more 'gumption'? Why could not he take a plain, common sense view of things, and see that two and two always

made four, instead of being told so downright?" There are so many things which people ought to understand without being told! Any one might think that Mr. Ellacombe was bringing this young man into the house on purpose to make love to Mary. Mrs. Ellacombe knew that nothing was farther from her husband's simple mind, but she could feel no comfort in such simplicity. She thought she was sure of Mary, because Mary would never take anything into her head but what was right and "vitty." But she was not sure of Mr. Raine.

While hemming her end of the sheet at Mrs. Tregellas's bee, she had noticed that Mr. Raine had scarcely said a word to Miss Haverstock who, being a colonel's daughter, was the most important young lady present. There was no question that Mary was the prettiest; but that was neither here nor there. Mr. Raine had undoubtedly noticed Mary. It had even seemed to her that he had manœuvred to get near Mary. He had followed after her quickly when she left the room to see to the junket; she had heard their voices in the dining-room. She knew Mary's shyness too well to suppose that she would do otherwise than speak because she must. On Mr. Raine's side it was doubtless no more than the natural attraction of a young man for the prettiest girl in the company.

But supposing it should go farther? Was her daughter to feel herself honoured that this young man should choose her for his pastime? And, suppose again, that what was pastime to him should prove deadly earnest to Mary? Mary, it was certain, had

spoken of the young fellow in terms of contempt; but who could ever tell what was in a girl's mind? Yet, no sooner had Mrs. Ellacombe's thought put itself into shape than she thrust it from her as disloyal to her child. There was no doubleness in Mary.

These perplexed musings were broken in upon by Mary herself. "Why, mother!" she exclaimed. "Mother, I was going to do all that."

"I thought I would make a beginning," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

She sat down and looked at Mary as she put on her apron and went about her work. Since this thing was to be, why, she asked herself, be miserable about it? But she sat and looked at her child and did feel miserable. Her husband might say what he pleased about the leadings of Providence; but to her mind the leadings of Providence appeared to be all the other way. And she sighed, thinking how impossible, how hopeless a thing it was for her to suppose that her husband would ever come round to her way of thinking. If any harm came, then—then he would fret a bit, and betake himself to prayer: which would be just as much use as locking the stable door when the steed was stolen.

Mary turned her head. "What is the matter, mother? You gave such a sigh!"

Mrs. Ellacombe sighed again. "I'm worried, child I'm worried."

In an instant Mary's arms were round her mother's neck.

"Mammy dear, what is it?"

"There's father going to take Mr. Raine in as a farm pupil."

"Oh!" said Mary, and her face clouded over. She went back to her work, and finished making up the pats. Then she said:—"Is father in want of money?"

Mrs. Ellacombe said she thought not. To be sure they made less than they did at home in Devonshire; but then, they spent less. "Father seemed to think he was likely to be an instrument of good to Mr. Raine."

"Oh!" said Mary; and Mrs. Ellacombe could not tell whether the interjection was one of assent or of dissent. She was looking at the butter as it lay on the dish. "Do what I will, this butter won't work up like Devonshire butter, and it won't taste like Devonshire butter."

"I don't see how it should, either," said her mother.

"I suppose we may be thankful it does not look like Somersetshire butter, eh mother?"

Mrs. Ellacombe assented with a sigh.

"There again!" cried Mary. "Mother dear, if Mr. Raine's coming bothers you so much, why not ask father to put him off?"

Mrs. Ellacombe shook her head. "I don't see how I could. Your father would think me so unreasonable."

"I don't see why he should," Mary insisted. "One more person does make more work. Every one knows that."

"Father did not seem to think so."

"What should a man know about such things!" said Mary laughing. "Well, good-bye to our pleasant evenings as long as he is here. I suppose I am a selfish

creature, but I cannot help feeling sorry he is coming. What could have put it into father's head to have him?"

"Father says he asked him as a favour. He makes out he wants to learn farming."

Mary's face was a study. "He will get tired of it before long. Farming doesn't agree with lying in bed till eight or nine, as those people do. But," she added, "my mind is made up about one thing."

'And what might that be, Mary?"

"I won't have him coming in here with his chattering when I'm busy with the butter."

"Trust me for that," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "If he comes, he shall be made to know his place and keep it, just like any other farm pupil."

Mrs. Ellacombe left the dairy to attend to her own business, feeling greatly comforted by Mary's demeanour. As soon as it was necessary she attended herself to the making ready of the spare room, being fully determined that neither directly nor indirectly should Mary wait upon Mr. Raine. She had heard before now —what woman living in the country had not heard?— of gentlemen—sportsmen, anglers, or what not—stealing away the hearts of pretty farmers' daughters, and then leaving them to wear the willow; and she had always held that in such cases the girls' mothers were to blame. She was resolved that she would not be such a mother. There should be no locking of the door after the steed was stolen. Mary must sit at the same table with the new farm pupil, and if he spoke to her she must answer with civility. But she would

see to it that there should be no further intercourse between her daughter and the Honourable William Raine.

When Mr. Ellacombe came in to tea that evening, he brought his wife a letter from a connection of hers by marriage, a stepson of a married sister, George Pennefather by name. He was already aware of the contents, having opened and read the letter at the post-office. Mary read it over her mother's shoulder, and there were many feminine exclamations before they had finished its perusal. George had been an inmate of Mr. Ellacombe's household when a youth, and had in fact had his first training in the ways of farming from the old man. He had set up for himself as a farmer some years ago, but had chosen to move quite away from the west country, so that there had been no intercourse except a letter about once a year. They heard a good deal about him however, from Mrs. Ellacombe's sister, and he was always spoken of as a smart, go-a-head young man, a staunch Methodist of the new school, one who would make the best of both worlds. This letter, however, was not jubilant in its tone. It spoke of heavy losses owing to cattle plague and a succession of bad harvests, and the writer clearly thought that the good days for farmers in England were over. The letter was dated from a town in Canada, where George had had serious thoughts of settling. But, as he was already so far from home, he wrote, he might as well take a run down south, and see what sort of a place Harmonia was.

"Well to be sure!" said Mrs. Ellacombe, as she

folded up the letter. "So George has had his trials too, poor fellow!"

"How nice it will be to see somebody from England," said Mary blushing with pleasure.

"I should have thought you'd forgotten George," said her father.

"No indeed," said Mary. "I never forget my friends. George mended my wax doll once, and I still feel grateful."

Mrs. Ellacombe, seeing Mary's heightened colour, began to ask herself whether this visit of George's might not be providential. To be sure, he was nearly ten years older than Mary, but Mary perhaps would not mind that. She remembered how he had taken her on his knee and caressed her when she was a wee toddling thing, and how he had called her his little wife, with Mary's ready acquiescence. How would it be now, if he fell in love with her for good, now that she was grown up, and grown so pretty? Suppose it should please Providence that the two should take to each other! Mrs. Ellacombe would not have ventured on such presumption as to pray that such a thing might come to pass. But if it did, how glad, how thankful, would she be! With this wish hidden in her heart she set about preparing a room for George Pennefather; nor did she forbid Mary to help her.

The old man, hearing that a second guest-chamber was contemplated, wondered audibly why one room would not do for the two young men. But this was a matter which lay entirely within Mrs. Ellacombe's province, and she uttered a decided veto. "Gentlefolks

don't like such close quarters. Mr. Raine will expect a room to himself, and I mean him to have his money's worth for his money."

"And Cousin George is accustomed to sit and read and meditate in his own room," said Mary.

"Well," said the old man, "when I was young and going visiting, all I expected was a part of a bed, perhaps."

Mrs. Ellacombe rejoined that people were a great deal more particular nowadays. How it came to pass Mr. Ellacombe never quite knew, but a second chamber was got ready, though his wife asked him for no money, and he never got any bill from the furniture store. She and Mary put their private store together, and bought what was necessary to give an air of comfort to a bare little room in the roof. Happening to see the door open while Mary was putting the finishing touches, Mr. Ellacombe remarked that they were treating George as if he were a prince. "He is quite as good as a prince to us," said Mary, with a smile at the results of her handiwork.

The little room, however, was ready some time before George was ready to take possession of it. He wrote to say that he was visiting the principal wheat-growing districts in New York State; then he branched off to New Jersey; then a letter came saying they must not expect him till they saw him, because he was going to take a run into Ohio to see the cheese factories there. In consequence of these delays, Raine had been three weeks at the Ellacombes' house before the day of George's arrival.

Having at first been inclined to resent Raine's coming, Mary was surprised to find how little difference he really made in the household routine. He seemed to fall into their ways as if he had lived with them all his life. At the same time he never became intrusive. Mary's *sanctum*, the dairy, was her own private corner still; he had understood without being told, that it was forbidden ground. He went out and came in with the old man, and followed his behests to the letter. If he jumped up to offer a chair to Mary when she entered the room, he was equally polite to Mrs. Ellacombe. Nay, his assiduity was so constant in picking up her scissors when she sat at work, that Mrs. Ellacombe felt quite "flustered," as she told Mary; and she got a piece of string and fastened them round her waist, so that when she had them on her lap they might not be constantly slipping to the ground. Mrs. Ellacombe, who had purposed to satisfy his just demands as a resident pupil and no more, before long found herself taking a quasi-maternal interest in the state of his wardrobe and putting his socks side by side with her husband's in her mending basket. Nobody would know it, she thought. It was not in the bond, and young gentlemen were so accustomed to have things done for them!—Raine, indeed, when he found his clothes in good condition, and buttons supplied where they had been lacking, thought that he was beholden to the laundress, and that he should be charged extra when his bill came in. But Mary, with a girl's sharp eyes, saw one day that the sock her mother held in her hand was not her father's, and she understood at once.

"Mother!" she exclaimed. Then in an undertone as though the walls might hear, "Mother, if I were you, I would not mend his socks."

"Of course I am not obliged to do it," said Mrs. Ellacombe in a tone that was almost apologetic. "But I declare it goes to my heart to see good clothes ruined for want of the stitch in time. He's got three dozen pair, Mary, if you'll believe me, and never a sound one among them all till I took 'em in hand. And such fine socks!"

"If 'twas four dozen I wouldn't touch them," said Mary.

"You touch them! I should think not! But if I choose to, why it's neither here nor there. His being here is not such a worry as I expected."

"That is true. But for all that I don't like the idea of your taking so much trouble. He'd go barefoot before I'd touch his socks," said Mary, throwing down one which she had picked out of the basket.

Mrs. Ellacombe gave a sigh of relief when Mary left the room after this speech. There was no harm done so far, and very likely Mr. Raine would get tired of learning to farm before three months were over.

Mrs. Ellacombe might have continued her good offices for an indefinite length of time without Raine's being aware to whom he was indebted, had he not chanced to find her in his room one day, putting away the last mended pair of the three dozen socks.

"Oh," said he, "I couldn't think what had become of them all. You don't mean to tell me you have been actually mending them!"

Mrs. Ellacombe flushed slightly. "They were so full of holes I really couldn't bear to see 'em," she said, shyly.

Raine took her hands and squeezed them. She had her thimble on, and the squeeze hurt her. "I do think you are the kindest woman in the world," he said. And she hurried away, blushing like a girl. But Raine followed her down stairs and reiterated his thanks, and even expressed his gratitude to Mary, who was passing by on her way to the garden. Mary answered that her mother was always kind to everybody, and went on, blushing in her turn. It was quite right that Mr. Raine should express his thanks, but she did wish her mother had let the darning alone. Nevertheless the giving and receiving of this small kindness made a difference in their relations to each other. Mary ceased to keep her dairy door so jealously shut, and Mrs. Ellacombe no longer watched lest the farm pupil should step beyond his place. By the time George Pennefather arrived, Raine was completely one of the family; and the old man wondered and was a little put out when on the morning of the day George was to come, he disappeared, and did not come back till it was nearly bed-time. "Oh!" he said, "I supposed you would be taken up with your nephew, so I thought it would be a good idea to take a day off and see what all the fellows were about."

George had travelled all night and arrived quite early in the morning. But, as he had taken his ease in a Pullman car, he was by no means the typical way-worn traveller when he descended from the buggy

which had been sent to meet him at Harmonia Junction. Mary, who had been up for two hours, and who had made the rolls and the coffee herself in her fear lest they should be spoilt by the negro cook, came forward in a thrill of expectancy, with shining eyes and a colour that came and went. Mrs. Ellacombe ran out with outstretched hands, her cap strings floating in the morning breeze, and then Mary, who had turned shy at the last moment and stayed behind her mother, saw a dark-haired, red-whiskered, florid person, large and loose jointed, descend from the buggy and shake hands with his aunt. Girl-like, Mary had made an inventory of her cousin's clothes and general appearance before he had set his foot on the threshold. She hardly knew what she had expected, but she had expected something quite different from what she saw. His clothes were new, and they did not fit. He wore a bright-blue satin tie, and the contrast between the blue of the tie and the red of his broad cheeks, and the rufousness of his whiskers was violent enough to offend even Mary's untrained eye. It gave him an aggressive air, as of a savage in his warpaint; and the air of aggressiveness was not tempered by his voice, which was loud and full, and had a deep roll in it which resounded through the little house like the bass viol on Sunday evenings at the chapel where the Ellacombes had been wont to worship. And he had a way with him—though of this Mary did not become immediately conscious—as if he were a very large person and required a great deal of room.

He took both Mary's hands and drew her to him,

giving her a sounding kiss. "So this is little Mary!" he said.

The words were inoffensive; but the voice and the manner were patronising. It was as if Mary were a small, weak creature whom he hereby took under his protection.

Mary had been "little Mary" once upon a time. To her father she was "little Mary" still, but she was conscious within herself of being altogether grown up, and of being beyond the patronising of even such an important person as Cousin George. Mary, after the first greetings, was suffered to fall quite into the background. Her father had much to ask George about, concerning the welfare of the temperance society to which they both belonged, and the doings of the last conference. It was with these matters as with farming; in all, George belonged to the new school; and like many others of the new school, it seemed part and parcel of his faith to utter aloud his contempt for the old. It need hardly be said that the old west-country farmer belonged to the old school in politics and in religion. "You west-country folk are all in a rut; all in a rut," George had said, during dinner. And he had pooh-poohed Mrs. Ellacombe's poultry coops which her husband had knocked together with a few nails; and her bronze turkey poults of which she was so proud. "We do the best we can," she had said, feeling mortified; for she had sacrificed one of the bronze turkey poults in George's honour. And George had gone on to praise some other breed of turkeys, and another and much more costly style of coop. Mrs. Ellacombe remembered

how delighted Raine had been with those same coops; and how he had praised her cleverness with poultry, and particularly with the bronze turkey poults. It was true that George knew exactly how things should be done and Raine did not. Still, she felt herself making comparisons. It was not well to be puffed up, perhaps it was meant as a salutary discipline that a superior person should appear on the scene and make candid and depreciatory remarks. But it was undoubtedly pleasanter to have to do with a person like Raine, who did not pretend to be superior, and who always professed himself charmed with everything in which she took a housewifely interest. These comparisons shaped themselves half unconsciously in Mrs. Ellacombe's mind as the day wore on,—one of the longest days she had ever spent, it seemed to her. She was truly glad to see George, she was ready to give him of her very best; but, what a relief it would have been had he not been quite so superior! When in the evening Raine came in, again she found herself making comparisons between the two, and again George Pennefather appeared at a disadvantage. Raine was dressed in a coat much worn about the seams, and his nether garments showed signs of his having passed by rough ways,—across gullies and over snake fences; and the hat which he laid on the side table was in very sharp contrast to George's shiny new hat. Yet, how evident it was that that old coat had been "built" by a first-rate tailor, and how doubly evident was it that the man wearing that old coat was of gentle birth!

Mrs. Ellacombe performed the ceremony of introduc-

tion and bungled over it in her nervousness. "Mr. Raine," she said, and then caught herself up with "The Honourable Mr. Raine," and then blushed at her mistake. "I declare, you'll think I've forgotten my manners!" she said.

Raine smiled pleasantly and said he should never think such a thing, and he turned to George and said a civil word or two about the length of time he had been expected. And George, holding out his hand, said "How do you do, sir!" as if it were a challenge to him to "come on."

Mary, who had had an arduous day in the kitchen in her anxiety lest the meals should not be in all respects to her cousin's liking, found herself, now that she was able to sit down and rest, making comparisons between the two young men; and as with Mrs. Ellacombe, the comparisons were not to her cousin's advantage. Cousin George had talked all day. She had heard fragments of his discourse in her goings in and out. Was she in the kitchen, Cousin George's voice resounded from the parlour; did she visit the poultry yard, it came, full and strong and aggressive, from the neighbourhood of the barn, drowning the feebler pipe of the old man. George resumed the conversation which Raine's entrance had interrupted, if conversation it could be called which was a loud laying down of the law on one side, and a feeble acquiescence or faint remonstrance on the other. Raine tried to say a word to the two women who sat a little apart working in silence, but the loud voice drowned all attempts at separate conversation. Once when George flatly contradicted the old man, Mrs.

Ellacombe and Mary both looked up, and Raine, who had taken up a newspaper—as he often did, because then he could look at Mary without her being aware of it—Raine saw her glance indignantly at George, who was sitting with his back towards her. Her lips opened as if she were about to speak; but she caught her mother's eye, and again bent her head to her work.

"There are no two ways about it," George was saying, "and I think I ought to know." He threw himself back in his chair as he spoke, and squared his shoulders, and his manner seemed a challenge to whomsoever should contradict him. He was sitting in a little chair, and the little chair creaked and groaned as though it must break under his weight.

Mr. Ellacombe, strange to say, did not appear to be offended. Yet, as head of the household, he too had been wont to lay down the law. Raine had observed that whenever his wife differed from him it was with an air of deprecation, though his manner on such occasions was only that of calm certainty, never loud-voiced or aggressive.

But now, old Mr. Ellacombe seemed to bend before his young kinsman's arrogant self-assertion. "Very likely; very likely you are right," he said in a meek voice.

Raine, watching and listening behind his newspaper, felt himself taking sides with the old man whose authority and judgment were being trampled on with so little ceremony. "Beastly cad!" he muttered to himself, with a wrathful look at George, who sat and laid down the law while the little chair groaned and creaked beneath him. Raine longed to contradict him as flatly

as he had contradicted Mr. Ellacombe. Fortunately he had just enough knowledge to know that he knew nothing whatever of the subject on which George was holding forth. How should he know which were the improved ploughs, and which the antiquated? It was an advance—for him—to know that there were differences in ploughs: that some were best for heavy land and others for light; and others again for hillside culture. George, who had been one of the judges at a ploughing match before he came out, spoke *ex cathedrâ*, and Raine had sense enough to know that most likely he was in the right, though he would have been delighted had any one got up and proved him wholly in the wrong.

"But the bad taste of it!" thought Raine. "To set the poor old man down so unceremoniously in his own house, and before everybody. I'd lay ten to one this fellow is a Radical." Mary, looking up, caught the look which Raine gave her unconscious cousin over his newspaper—a look made up of a little indignation and a good deal of amused contempt—and gave Raine a glance and a smile in return, which set Raine's heart beating with delight. His face flushed, and his head actually swam for a minute. He passed his hand over his eyes, scarcely able to believe that it was indeed Mary—shy Mary, whom he had likened to an icicle—who now smiled on him of her own accord. But—whether it was that the superior person had at last talked himself out, or that Mr. Ellacombe felt that the outpouring of valuable information was as much as he could assimilate for the time—there was a pause, and

then Mr. Ellacombe looked at his watch and rose, saying he would take a look round. Raine followed him out of the room, and George Pennefather seemed to remember that Mary and her mother were there, and turning himself round in his chair, addressed himself to them.

"How did that chap come here?" he asked.

Mrs. Ellacombe, trembling inwardly lest the unceremonious inquiry should have been heard by Raine, answered that he had come as a farm pupil.

George threw himself back in his chair and laughed. 'The Honourable Mr. Raine!" he exclaimed, with an access of mirth and a strong stress on the initial *h*, "Looks as if he had come here to wear out all his old clothes, eh?"

"I don't know how that may be. I never asked him," was Mrs. Ellacombe's reply. It was spoken very quietly. but Mary knew that she was nettled.

"Ah, they are a poor lot, these *h*onourables," said George. "The half of 'em have never a penny to bless themselves with, and the other half spend like fools. He looks as if he belonged to the first half. What might his capital be, now?"

Mrs. Ellacombe replied that she did not know. But she did know one thing, and that was that Mr. Ellacombe had found him a very biddable young man so far, and that he kept himself to himself, and behaved as "vittily" as any one could wish. She always spoke of people as she found them, and she was bound to say she had no fault to find with Mr. Raine.

"And he thinks a deal of what father says," Mary

added, still resentful of Cousin George's contradiction of her father. George Pennefather turned sharply round on her. "Oh, ho! Sits the wind in that quarter?" he exclaimed with a resounding laugh. "Little Mary taking up the cudgels for the *h*onourable! I smell a rat."

"I don't know what you mean," said Mary, blushing to her finger tips.

"Well now, Aunt Ellacombe," said George, "I'll just tell you what it is. Farm-pupiling is all my eye; that chap is after Mary, so sure as I'm born."

"Cousin George, how dare you!" said Mary.

"George, what next!—" said Mrs. Ellacombe.

It would be hard to say which of the two blushed deepest.

"Farm pupil is all my eye!" George repeated. "It's all very well to say 'Oh, George!' When this *h*onourable chap has played his little game, and left Miss Mary to wear the willow, you'll mind what I've said, Aunt Ellacombe."

Mary rose, pale and trembling. "Mother," she said in a choked voice, "you don't want me to stop here to be insulted, I suppose. I'll say good-night."

She ran up stairs to her own room, and threw herself on the bed with her face on the pillow. "I'll never speak to Cousin George again as long as I live!" she said in her anger. "Never! never! He's no gentleman, for all his new clothes, and Mr. Raine is worth fifty of him," she cried with a burst of passionate tears.

George, in the parlour, sat with a satisfied smile on his broad face at the disturbance he had caused.

"Looks as if there was a guilty conscience there," he

said with a short laugh. And he stuck his thumbs through the armholes of his waistcoat and expanded his chest as if he felt proud of having made Mary angry.

The mother's ear caught the stifled sound of her child's indignant weeping, and her anger was hot against George.

"Oh, George! How could you?" she cried. "You should not have said that; indeed you should not. Mary's feelings have been greatly hurt."

Her eyes were full of tears, and she gulped down a sob as she spoke. She would have liked to run up stairs and comfort her child, but George was a guest, and Mrs. Ellacombe could not forget her manners, no matter how much her guest might forget his. It was not manners, according to the code by which Mrs. Ellacombe had been brought up, to leave a guest to entertain himself—at least, not till he had been a day or two in the house.

George was not one whit abashed at her reproach. "Ha!" he said. "Forewarned is forearmed, ain't it?"

"If you thought fit to say a word to me, well and good. But to say such a thing before that child!"

"Child! She's no child," said George.

"She is a child in a good many ways," Mrs. Ellacombe insisted. "And why should you go putting things into her head?"

"Pshaw! Do you mean to tell me that that honourable chap ain't her beau? Tell that to the marines!"

"I do mean to tell you that," said Mrs. Ellacombe hotly. "Mary never had a thought of any such nonsense. Mr. Raine, indeed! I wonder how a man of

your judgment can be so foolish; and Mary looking forward so much to see you, and thinking of what you'd like and all"—and Mrs. Ellacombe gave a little sob and put her apron up to her eyes—"I—I declare I wouldn't have had such a thing said for a thousand pound!"

"Well, aunt," said George, with perhaps the abatement of a hundredth part of his self-satisfaction, "as I meant no offence, you need take none. I hold plain speaking to be the best, anyway, and I shouldn't have said what I did—I shouldn't have thought it perhaps—if I hadn't felt a kind of—of—friendly interest in Mary. She's no kin to me, really; I know that. But I've always felt as if she was." And George leaned across the table towards his aunt, and spoke in a less blatant key—"Mary's grown up as pretty a girl as I've ever set eyes on, and I shouldn't be doing my duty if I didn't warn you."

For an instant Mrs. Ellacombe was speechless with indignation. "Oh!" she cried at last, "I don't know about other girls, but my child has been brought up quite different. She's been taught to keep herself to herself: and she does it. Nobody can breathe a word against my Mary."

"Nobody's wanting to breathe a word against her that I know by," said George. "But if that honourable were not casting sheep's eyes at her just now over his paper, why—I'm a Dutchman!"

He slapped his hand on his leg as he spoke, and his tone and manner were more self-satisfied, more defiant, and more irritating than ever.

"Well, well; you're one 'tis no use arguing with, I

see," said Mrs. Ellacombe, who felt her patience wearing very thin. "But I beg, George, you will say not another word of this to Mary. I shall take it unkind if you do."

"Mary's no call to be so thin-skinned as all that," was George's reply.

Mrs. Ellacombe made no rejoinder; she felt that she was on the verge of a quarrel, and that she could only save herself by silence. When Mr. Ellacombe came in, followed by Raine, she hastened to set the big Bible before him and to call the negro servant. Seldom had an evening ended with her in such an uncomfortable manner. Her mind was all out of tune for prayer and pious meditation. Perhaps that was the reason why she hastened to place the Bible before her husband. She wanted the perfunctory service over; she required a little while to herself—to enter into her closet and shut the door. It was so easy to sing and give thanks, and listen to good words and pray for blessings on oneself and all and sundry, when one hadn't a grievance in the world!

The old man looked round. Generally it was Mary who performed the little office. There was the big Bible to place, and then the lamp in a particular position, and a footstool, because of Mr. Ellacombe's right knee being a little stiff, and the spectacles handy. Often Mary found the place, and put a marker on the part of the page where the chapter began. Mrs. Ellacombe, who had heard a chapter read daily and nightly for more than forty years, knew it all by heart so well that she could always have repeated a verse ahead of

the one which was being read. But she scarcely ever remembered, as Mary did, which chapter had been read last. The old man missed the mark, and had to search for his spectacles, and asked where Mary was. Mrs. Ellacombe answered that she was gone to bed; and the little service proceeded.

The words were good, as they always were, out of the fulness of a good man's heart. They were a thanksgiving for mercies received, and the invoking of a special blessing on the guest. If the old man had prayed for grace to forgive one's enemies, Mrs. Ellacombe would have felt it appropriate to herself. She wished George Pennefather no harm, but she was as angry with him as it was in her sweet nature to be.

When all the house was quiet, Mrs. Ellacombe went softly into her daughter's room. Mary was in bed, and the lamp was turned down. Mrs. Ellacombe put her face to her child's face, and touched her cheek with her lips. It was wet. "My lamb! She's cried herself to sleep," was the mother's thought. "George ought to be ashamed of himself."

Mary woke at her mother's kiss and sat up.

"I didn't want to wake you," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"I only just dropped off. I knew you would come in," said Mary, throwing her arm round her mother. "Mother dear,"—she took her hand and pressed it tightly between her own—"I want to go away. You'll make out for a bit without me, won't you?"

Mrs. Ellacombe was silent. Mary was not wont to be unreasonable in her demands; but where was she to go,

except to England? And that would cost such a deal of money!

"I do want to go away," the girl repeated. "I feel so angry with Cousin George. Oh, mother, you don't know how I feel."

"He had no call to say what he did," said Mrs. Ellacombe, "but he meant no offence. He said so after you had left the room." Even in anger, she had a sense of justice; and then too, George was a guest, after all. And perhaps, had it been any girl but Mary, his speech had not given such dire offence. She sighed, remembering—poor woman—the secret hope she had nursed; George himself had dashed that hope to the ground. For what girl of spirit would ever fall in love with a man who signalized the renewal of their acquaintance by deeply offending her?

"It is all very well to say he meant no offence, mother," said Mary. "That is just what people say after they've said something dreadful to hurt a body's feelings. Mother, if you can't spare me away from home I wish you'd let me take my meals in the kitchen. I'd do anything rather than sit opposite Cousin George three times a day. It seems as if the victuals would choke me."

"Oh, Mary, what would father say? And where are you to go? 'Tisn't like at home, you know."

"I've managed it all in my own mind," said Mary eagerly. "I'll ask Mrs. Tregellas to take me in for a few days. And as soon as Cousin George is gone, you can send for me."

"But what would father say?"

"Oh, mother, can't you manage it for me? Mother dear, you will manage it for me, won't you?" Mary pleaded.

"I don't know what Mrs. Tregellas will think."

"I'll manage that. I'll tell her the exact truth."

"Oh, Mary! Not that I would have you tell a story for the world. But—"

"I mean that I'll tell her I want to be away while Cousin George is here. Isn't that the exact truth?"

"Well,—yes. But I don't know but she might think it forward, your offering a visit. It's a thing I should never dream of. Dear me! Your grandmother Ellacombe thought herself made much of when Mrs. Tregellas's grandmother's housekeeper asked her up to the great house to take a dish of tea."

But Mary prevailed. Before sunrise the next morning a messenger was on his way with a note to Mrs. Tregellas; and by the time Mary had begun to churn, a note came back in answer to hers, begging her to come and stay as long as she liked.

"There! Didn't I tell you how it would be?" said Mary, as she showed the note to her mother.

"She is very kind," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "Let us hope all will be ordered for the best. Shall you say good-bye to George before you go?"

Mary's answer was a vehement negative.

"If I say good-bye he will be offering to kiss me, and then I know I shall box his ears."

"Mary!" said Mrs. Ellacombe. She hardly knew the girl. Was this her gentle lamb-like child; this girl, whose eyes sparkled and whose cheeks reddened with

anger when she spoke of boxing her Cousin George's ears?

"Well," said Mary, "I don't want to do it, of course. He'd be dreadfully shocked at my bad manners. I don't wish to insult him because he insulted me."

"Shall you come in to dinner?" said Mrs. Ellacombe. Mary had declared she would not meet her cousin at breakfast, and she had kept her word, taking her own meal hastily before the breakfast bell rang.

"It depends on how I feel," said Mary. "I don't know how to sit quiet and eat as if nothing was the matter. It seems to me as if I had never been angry in my life before now. And I can't endure the thought of looking up and catching Mr. Raine's eye, and feeling all the while that Cousin George is watching—as if—as if there were something between us. I don't feel at all meek and mild. I feel wicked," she said, caressing her mother.

Mrs. Ellacombe returned the caress. "Oh what fools men are, to be sure!" she said. "Why don't they have a little gumption?"

"They were born so," said Mary gravely; and ran away to pack up.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARY'S LOVERS.

When Mrs. Ellacombe went out to tell the man to get the buggy ready, she found him already putting the horse in the shafts for Mr. Pennefather. There was no help for it. Mary could not walk so far; so she must wait till the afternoon. "If you wouldn't mind coming in to dinner!" Mrs. Ellacombe said when she went back to Mary's room to tell her, "Father will think it so strange, your staying away for two meals. And I do hate to have to explain the why and the wherefore. And what will you do if father says it's all nonsense, and bids me tell you to come in and eat your victuals without more ado? Men are so odd sometimes, you know."

Mary declared that rather than give her mother cause for vexation she would meet Cousin George, and even run the risk of catching Mr. Raine's eye. "But," she said, "I'm not going to say 'good-bye' to Cousin George. Don't ask me to do that, mother." Mrs. Ellacombe declared she had no such intention. It seemed as though Cousin George meant to find his

dinner elsewhere that day, for as he drove off he called out to his aunt not to wait dinner for him; in a magisterial tone, thought Mary, who heard him through the window. She did her best to have dinner ready with more than the usual punctuality. But grace had hardly been said before Cousin George came in.

Mrs. Ellacombe endeavoured to say something agreeable. Had he had a pleasant drive? Had he had a good look round? George answered with a laugh that as far as he had seen yet, there was nothing to look at. He was loud in his scorn of the park and the cricket ground. "What earthly use is a park and a cricket ground, I should like to know? That sort of thing costs money to keep up, I know. Do you mean to tell me everybody is taxed for that?"

"A mere nothing. A shilling a year, or less," said Raine.

"I wouldn't pay a sixpence," said George. "Well, I saw some fellows—gentlefolks I suppose they'd call themselves—playing lawn tennis. Lawn tennis at ten o'clock in the morning!"

"Well, why not?" said Raine.

"Well, sir, I was told this was an agricultural settlement. I may have been told wrong, but that's what I was told."

"I suppose it is more that than anything else. But I don't see why that should prevent people playing lawn tennis or anything else if they feel inclined. I'm sure I've played many a game at ten o'clock in the morning since I came here, and I have been none the worse for it," said Raine. "It's capital exercise."

"I have always thought that farmers found exercise enough in minding their business. I'm a practical man, sir, and such has been my experience. Of course I may be wrong."

"It does not do a fellow any good to have his nose always at the grindstone," said Raine.

"Well, sir, if I was to play lawn tennis at ten in the morning or any other time o' day, I should expect to find myself in the bankruptcy court pretty quick. A man that has as good as made his money can afford to throw away his time, while a man that has his money to make daren't. Have the people here all made their money, and come out here to spend it? If so, I've not a word to say against 'em."

Raine was silent. George went on: "I met a talkative kind of chap, sort of land agent, I should say. To hear him you'd think this was the finest bit of earth the Lord ever made, and he'd just discovered it, and was taking samples to market."

They all exclaimed, "Major Forepaw!" and then laughed.

"Major, eh? Looked to me like a lawyer. Kind o' fellow would talk a horse's head off. Says I, 'Show me the land that will make twenty-eight bushel number one wheat to the acre in an average good year. Show me that, and I'm ready to buy it.' 'Oh,' says he, 'my dear sir, if that's what you want, you must go to the prairie lands of Minnesota.' 'All right,' says I. Then I got talking with another chap, and he says he averages ten bushels. Ten bushels!" George repeated, with concentrated scorn. "Well, I drove right round, and I've

come back to where I started, and I haven't seen an acre of good wheat land yet."

"The land hereabouts is not over well adapted to wheat," said the old man, in the voice that sounded so meek after George's resonant bass. "But it will grow other things."

"What other things?" George demanded. "Don't tell me!—What's to be said of land—farm land—that won't grow a crop of the staff of life? That lawyer chap, he talked about maize; corn he called it. Corn! Meat for pigs I call it, and not half as good as barley when all's said and done. No, no. I believe this to be an out and out swindle, and when I get home I mean to write to the *Times* about it."

"I don't know that I would do that, George," said the old man. "The place seems to suit some people."

"Those that can play at lawn tennis at ten in the morning, eh? Very likely. But I say it's a swindle to call it an agricultural settlement. Let 'em call it a refuge—ay—a refuge—for fine folks that are out at elbows at home, and couldn't do a hand's turn to save their lives. Well and good. I'll say not a word against that. But to call it an agricultural settlement makes it a swindle at once in my view, Uncle Ellacombe."

"Depends on which view you take, I suppose," said the old man.

Dinner was over. There was no dessert, and there was neither wine nor spirits to give the men an excuse for lingering at table; but George still sat and argued. Mary had left the room, and Mrs. Ellacombe presently followed. George, in the plenitude of his judgment,

had begun to take Mr. Ellacombe to task for having allowed himself to be talked into settling in Harmonia. He feared that his uncle would find it a money-losing move. He would come to wish, perhaps, that he had remained in the old country.

"It suits some people's health," said Mr. Ellacombe. "Many will tell you that they have their health here better than they ever had it in England."

"Pshaw!" said George. "One place is as good as another as far as I can see. Fine ladies and gentlemen that haven't one earthly thing to do but eat and drink and play games, let them talk about this place and that being healthy; but not plain people like you and me, Uncle Ellacombe."

Mr. Ellacombe said something about Mary's health, and again George's exclamation was "Pshaw!"

"You've filled her head with nonsense, and you're turning her into a fine lady between you. There ain't a thing the matter with her except idleness. Look at her hands! I much doubt whether she could knead a loaf of bread or work a churning of butter to save her life."

The ill-fitting door of green wood had burst open, and the loud, pugnacious tones ascended through the little house. Mary and her mother, who were bringing down her bag and wraps to put in the buggy, looked at each other and laughed.

"George must ha' got out of bed wrong foot foremost this morning, I do think," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

The old man's voice rose in reply, not quite so meek as heretofore.

"You are totally mistaken," they heard him say. Then Raine appeared, looking flushed and angry.

"I'll be —" then he stopped, seeing Mary and Mrs. Ellacombe, and ran up stairs to them.

"A man has a right to his own opinions," he said, addressing Mrs. Ellacombe, "but when it comes to libelling Miss Ellacombe in that wholesale way, — by Jove! — I am not going to stand it. Didn't I see you knead the bread only yesterday? And I know you make the butter, for I've heard you singing in the dairy."

"No doubt you have," said Mrs. Ellacombe. Then they all three laughed, and in the midst of their laughter came George Pennefather's emphatic voice.

"Indeed, indeed! I'm very glad to hear it. I am exceedingly glad to hear it. Quite right. Quite right. Looks are deceptive sometimes," said George, with a laugh that sounded like the tap of a drum.

Mary snatched up her shawl bundle. "The sooner I am out of hearing of Cousin George's voice the better I shall be pleased. Don't bring the bag, mother. I'll send the boy up. Good bye, Mr. Raine."

Raine took the bag himself in spite of Mrs. Ellacombe's protest, and asked ruefully, as he followed her down stairs, whether Miss Ellacombe was going to stay away long. Mrs. Ellacombe replied that the length of her visit depended on one or two things, and did not say where the visit was to be.

"We shall be awfully dull without you," said Raine as he handed Mrs. Ellacombe into the buggy. Mary had sprung in without help and had gathered up the reins.

"The pony won't stand a minute with the flies worrying him so. Are you all right, mother?" she asked.

"I shall be back this evening," said Mrs. Ellacombe to Raine, answering as if he had addressed her; though both of them knew it was Mary to whom he had spoken.

"Should you not have shaken hands, Mary?" Mrs. Ellacombe suggested as they drove off. Mary declared that had she done so, Cousin George would have seen her from the window, and then pretended that there was an understanding between herself and Mr. Raine. "I believe Cousin George has eyes in the back of his head," she said.

Mrs. Ellacombe could not leave her daughter without expressing to Mrs. Tregellas a hope that she had not thought Mary forward in offering a visit. Edith hastened to re-assure her on that score. She hoped Mary would come whenever she pleased and stay as long as she pleased. But both Mary and her mother disclaimed all intention of making the visit a lengthy one. "Only a very few days, I hope. And how I am to get on without her I don't know," said Mrs. Ellacombe ruefully. Mary's last words were a request to be sent for as soon as Cousin George was gone.

The third day of Mary's visit was a Sunday. And as this happened to be the third Sunday in the month, there was no service at Harmonia. Mr. Bloss had undertaken a mission service once a month at a place called Big Lick, some five-and-twenty miles distant. Colonel Haverstock had been lay reader for a time; but since the disagreement between Mrs. Haverstock and

Mr. Bloss, he had been forced to decline the post, to the sorrow of every one, except Mrs. Haverstock; and the spirit had not as yet moved any one to offer to take his place. Consequently on this particular Sunday, instead of being at church, the various members of the Harmonia flock were at home, spending their day in a more or less secular manner. When there were a good many miles to be got over between the services, people mostly put up with cold dinner. But Tregellas detested cold dinners, and declared that Sunday was more of a fast than a feast, unless you had roast beef and plum-pudding; particularly plum-pudding, piping hot, as you had it on board ship. On this Sunday, possibly because she knew that if she stayed at home there would be a dinner to cook, Batheenie had pleaded a special service which all the members of her church were bound under severe penalties to attend. Tregellas had declared that he was not to be balked of his plum-pudding because Batheenie had struck work, and he had himself prepared a plum-pudding which was to turn out superior to any plum-pudding prepared with blind reliance on land lubbers' cookery books. He had sat in the kitchen all the morning smoking and keeping up the fire. And now while Edith and Mary were laying the cloth, he was turning the pudding out of its mould, and keeping an eye on the pudding sauce which was simmering on the stove.

Mary, who had just taken up a jug to get some water from the spring, put it down again with an exclamation.

"There is Mr. Raine!" And indeed it was Raine

himself coming towards the house, looking very well brushed and spruce, and smiling as usual.

"Mother must have sent for me. She must be ill," cried Mary, as she ran out. Edith followed and met Raine at the door.

Nothing was the matter, he assured Mary.

"And she has sent no message?" she asked.

The fact was—and here he broke off to inquire after Mrs. Tregellas's health. The fact was—he had just strolled down for the sake of a stroll, and had not said where he was going.

"I thought that if I struck here about dinner time, Mrs. Tregellas would take pity on my famished condition. Is Tregellas at home?"

"He is," said Edith. "But I don't know what would happen to me if I were to tell you where he is and what he is doing."

"I'm going to tell," said Mary. "I intend to tell everybody, because I think such a good example ought to be followed. He is in the kitchen, dishing up a plum-pudding which he made himself; and no one dares go near him till it is dished up and the sauce poured over it."

Raine said he had heard the story of a bishop who sewed on the fins of a turbot which his cook had cut off, but it seemed as if the bishop's feat were no such great one after all. Any fool could sew on fins with a needle and thread: but surely it required genius to make a plum-pudding.

After dinner — during which meal Raine was unwontedly silent — Mary went to her room with a book

containing selections for Sunday reading, and Tregellas bade Raine come out on the back porch and smoke. A pipe is always acceptable, even if a man be in love. Raine smoked his in silence, wondering whether Mary was asleep; whether she would stay in her room all the afternoon as she did at home; whether he could entice her out for a walk. Some girls would be glad enough to take a stroll with a young man; but Mary was not one of that sort. Once or twice Raine had asked her if she would not come for a stroll, but she had always had something to do which could not be put aside. When Tregellas stretched himself out on the floor and declared his intention of taking forty winks, Raine sought Mrs. Tregellas who was sitting alone on the front verandah, and asked her to manage so that he should be able to speak to Mary before he went.

"Then you have really made up your mind," said Edith.

"My mind was made up long ago, as you know," said Raine. "I thought I might be more sure of her after she knew me a little better. But I cannot say I feel a bit further advanced in her good graces than I was. I don't think she hates me: and that is about all."

"That is as much as a man has any right to expect," said Edith.

"I thought she seemed glad to see me just now. What did you think?" said Raine.

"She thought you had a message from her mother. Do not, pray, be too sanguine. You may be doomed to disappointment."

Raine took alarm immediately.

"You don't mean to tell me that she is sweet on that

cousin who came the other day!—that—that—awful cad, Pennefather. By Jove, Mrs. Tregellas, if I thought that, I don't know whether I should blow out my own brains—or his."

Edith hastened to say she did not suppose Mary to have the smallest liking for her cousin. "But you would frighten her if you talked in that way; you must try to be calm."

Raine declared he would not frighten her for the world.

"But it is so awfully serious to me, Mrs. Tregellas. Don't you see that it is? And—do you know that I heard from my father the other day, and he says he should be so glad if I would settle down. 'Settle down steadily to something.' Those are his very words. That is what has put me up to speaking now. That, and that cad Pennefather giving himself such airs. I believe he thinks Miss Ellacombe hardly good enough to black his boots for him. But—do you not think my father must have meant a hint in the direction of matrimony? What does 'settling down' mean, but matrimony?"

"It may mean that, or it may not. But if you want me to say that Lord Raine meant by that, that Miss Ellacombe would be a welcome daughter-in-law to him"—Edith shook her head. More could not be said on either side, for just then Mary herself appeared, declaring that she did nothing but nod over her book, and had given up reading in despair.

"Come for a stroll, Miss Ellacombe. That will wake you up," said Raine boldly. Mary made no objection, but went to get her hat and parasol.

"Wish me good luck, Mrs. Tregellas," said Raine, as he rose to follow Mary when she re-appeared. Edith smiled but did not speak.

"*Che sarà, sarà*," she said to herself as she watched the two walk away together.

They walked in silence for a little while. Raine eager to know his fate, yet not daring to say the words that must be said; Mary thinking how cruel it was of Cousin George to impute base motives to Mr. Raine, who had never even tried to get up a flirtation with her, as some men in his position would have done.

If Cousin George were ever to become by arduous endeavour half as gentlemanly as Mr. Raine, he might be well content. Mary's mind went back to the time when she was a growing girl, and had looked on her Cousin George as a very great personage. It has been shown how, on George's re-appearance, he had been displaced from his high pedestal. Mary had even got so far as to pity his wife, if ever he got one. The wife of such a Turk would never dare call her soul her own. How different men were! If the contrast was great between Cousin George and Mr. Raine, how much greater was it between Cousin George and Mr. Tregellas! Mary saw more and more the difference between people of her own class and real gentlefolks. Real gentlefolks did anything they pleased without stopping to consider whether it was derogatory or not. When Mary heard Mr. Tregellas announce his intention of making the plum-pudding she thought he was joking. But when she saw him do it, and saw moreover that he stayed in the kitchen and took all the real trouble of the

dinner off his wife's hands, she felt constrained to admire. She had never seen such a thing done before. Her own father, she knew, would not have done such a thing. He would have considered it his wife's business to get the dinner for him if there was not a servant to do it, while he would be sitting in his room reading a good book. As long as she could stand, it would be her business to see a proper dinner provided, either in person or by deputy. Such was her duty. It all lay within doors, just as much as his lay out of doors. He would no more think of offering to help her in an emergency than he would expect her to follow the plough on an emergency. Such was he, and such as he were the relatives and friends among whom Mary had grown up. But now she was gradually having her eyes opened to other conditions of existence.

"What happy people Mr. and Mrs. Tregellas are," she said, for the sake of saying something.

Raine, who had been cudgelling his brains to find an opening for what he wanted to say, answered eagerly:—

"They are indeed! And what a neat, snug little house they have."

Mary assented. "Those verandahs and large covered porches are so nice; I shall try to persuade father to build one next year. Mother would not feel the heat half as much if she had a big shady verandah to sit in."

"Do you think you could be happy in a little house like that?" said Raine.

Mary declared she could be happy anywhere, provided she were with people whom she liked.

"That is the great thing, of course. Then—you think that you would be happy in such a little house with a man you loved? You are not one to despise love in a cottage, Miss Ellacombe?"

"I believe there is more love in cottages than in fine houses," said Mary. She spoke with hesitation, and she blushed a little, as any sensitive girl might when a young man begins talking to her about love, even though it be only 'love in the abstract.'

But Raine, having once made the plunge, felt himself able to strike out boldly. "I want to tell you of something I thought when that house was being built. May I?"

She looked at him wondering. Why should he wish to tell her his thoughts? "If you like," she said shyly. Raine felt conscious of the change in her voice and manner, but he had gone too far to recede now.

"I thought—I thought—" he began hurriedly—"how happy I could be in such a little house, if—if I could marry the girl I loved. Do you remember that day? It is not so long ago when you count up the time, is it?"

"I remember," said Mary.

"It was the first time I had seen you."

"Was it?"

"And—and I have loved you from that day to this." For one moment Mary blushed crimson. Then she became pale and stood as if turned into stone. "Mr. Raine!" was all she could say. Then remembering what had been her thoughts of Raine, on that evening when she recognised his face as the face of the young

man whom she had seen staggering wild-eyed and disordered in his demeanour, across the street—remembering what her thoughts had been—how contemptuous, how pitiless she had been for the miserable creature who could so degrade himself—she turned away and covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Mary!" he pleaded. "Say you will try to love me a little; just a little."

"Impossible!" was all she could say.

"Mary, Mary!" He tried to take her hand. "Don't say that. Anything but that. Give me a little time. Is it because I have so little to offer you? I will work hard for you, Mary. Indeed I will. I'll do anything—anything. Only for God's sake, don't say that." He knelt and caught hold of her dress. "Mary," he cried, kissing her hand, "love me a little—only a little. I am not worthy of such an angel; I know that. Who would be worthy of such an one as you? And I've been such a fool—such an ass!—but if you will love me, I'll be so different. Only don't say you won't try to love me."

Mary drew her hand away. "Pray—pray do not kneel," she cried. "Who am I that you should kneel to me? I am so sorry for all this. I had no idea that you cared for me. Please don't say any more, and try to forget it."

"Forget!" cried Raine wildly. "Ah, it is easy to talk. Forget! Say you love some one else. Is that it?"

"No," said Mary proudly. "I have never seen any one I cared for; and I dare say I never shall."

"Then there is hope for me," cried Raine. "Tell me I may hope."

"I cannot tell you that. There can be no love between you and me."

"Mary! Is that your last word?"

"It must be. You will understand—after a little—when you go back among your own people, Mr. Raine. You will wonder how you could ever talk of love to—such a girl as I am—" Mary hesitated, and Raine broke in:—

"An angel, if ever there were one."

"A plain farmer's daughter," said Mary, unflinchingly.

"Is that all?" Raine asked. "What of that?"

Mary was silent. It was not all. There was a stronger reason than that. But how could she tell it? How could she remind the man who stood before her, a gentleman every inch of him—gentle in birth, in voice, in manner—how could she remind him of his other self, his worse self, whom she had seen with loathing and contempt. Such an one as George Pennefather might perhaps have told the cruel truth, and enjoyed the stabs he gave. But Mary's mind was not so constituted.

"Is that really all?" Raine insisted. "Oh, if I could but make you see how I scorn such worldly distinctions!"

"They cannot be scorned," said Mary gently. "But—even were I a gentleman's daughter, I could not marry you, for I do not love you."

But Raine would not be silenced. He entreated that

he might be allowed to try—only to try. Surely his devotion might prevail at last. Mary knew well enough in her own mind that she wanted something more than a man's devotion before her love could be given. The man she would love must have the power to withstand temptation. But she could not say this. She could only shake her head and murmur dissent to Raine's entreaties.

"If Mrs. Ellacombe would speak a kind word for me, would that make a difference?" he asked humbly.

"No, no," Mary cried. "I know mother would think exactly as I do about this. Mr. Raine, please go away—away from here. In a new place you might see some one you would like better—and then you would forget me."

"I do not want to forget you," he answered. "The only thing I can see against our marrying is that I am very poor. But—if you were only willing I would try what could be done. I would speak to my father. He is very anxious for me to settle."

"But he is not anxious for you to marry a farmer's daughter," said Mary. "I know that as well as if his lordship were here telling me so himself. Pray, pray put this thing out of your head."

"It would go out of my head fast enough if it were not in my heart," said Raine. "Ah, you can be cruel. You do not know what it is to love."

He broke away from her as he spoke, and she heard his footsteps crashing through the kalmia brush that clothed the hill-side behind her. She stood for a little

while listening, but when the sound of his footsteps had ceased she sat down on a fallen tree and cried. She did not like being told that she was cruel. Was it her fault if he gave his love and she could not give hers? Even were he no higher than herself in worldly rank, she was sure she should never love a man who had degraded himself. Raine was sober enough now: but what had been might be again.

And yet, Mary thought—as she rose at last and returned slowly to the house,—the pity of it! What a perfect gentleman he was! In a thousand ways he had shown his gentle breeding. He was courteous, not to Mary alone, but to her mother, who was stout and middle-aged, and to her father, who was a plain old man, and who allowed himself little eccentricities which neither his wife nor daughter dared interfere with. No one, to watch Mr. Raine's countenance, would have known that he noticed what was odd or countrified. Perhaps he would not have had such perfect command over his countenance had the old man been other than the father of the girl he was in love with: but this did not enter Mary's head. His very ignorance—and he was strangely ignorant of some things—was not as the ignorance of such an one as George Pennefather. It was neither displayed as creditable nor concealed as disgraceful. It was emphatically the ignorance of a gentleman: it offended no one. He wore it without self-consciousness, as he did his old coats; and if he confessed it, it was in a way that made one like him the better, as though he were to disclaim gently all intention of setting up as a superior person. Yes, Mr. Raine,

with his ignorance, was a far pleasanter guest than George Pennefather, with his stock of varied information, which he seemed to use principally to crush people, and to make himself offensive. By their very voices one would know them; by the way they sat down or rose up, could one tell that Mr. Raine was a gentleman, and Cousin George was not.

When Edith saw Mary return alone with a face all tear-stained and disturbed, she knew at once that Raine's wooing had not been successful. She handed Mary her cup of tea without asking any questions. But Tregellas, not understanding his wife's eloquent look, asked point-blank—"What have you done with Raine?" Mary murmured that she supposed he had gone home; and became so rosy red that a person even more obtuse than Tregellas must have understood that something had happened to ruffle the girl's usual placidity.

"He will have to grin and bear it as other fellows do," Tregellas said to his wife afterwards. "Sorry? Yes, of course one is sorry, to a certain extent. But what could he expect if he would fall in love with the wrong girl? Oh, he'll be like a bear with a sore head for a few days, and then he will fall in love with some one else. He is just that kind of fellow."

"Then I need not waste my sympathy," said Edith.

"I should say not," said Harry. "And you know the girl is worth ten of him."

"Let us hope he will not take to drinking again."

"Let us hope it. But should he do so, he will demonstrate how very unfit he is to be the husband of a nice girl such as Miss Ellacombe."

By Monday morning Mary had recovered her spirits, and was looking, Edith thought, prettier than ever. There never was a girl less vain. Yet, to have had words of love spoken to her, to have been told that she was an angel on the earth, to have had a man kneel before her and kiss her hand, and entreat abjectly that she would try to love him,—all this could not but make a difference. It was as if a new page in a new language had been given to her out of the book of her life. She seemed to know more in every sense than she had known yesterday. And she did not feel herself to be altogether such a humble insignificant personage as heretofore. Humble and insignificant she was in one sense, and would still remain. But to herself she had a certain sense of value. The fact of a man having told her of his love assured her that she could be loved. That she should ever love, herself, she did not think possible. If she should meet with one in her own walk of life, who was like Colonel Haverstock, or Mr. Tregellas, then perhaps she might love. But when should she ever meet with such an one?

"When a man is good, one ought not to mind the outside so much," thought Mary. "Father would say I was frivolous. I suppose I am, for I do mind. It seems to me sometimes as if manners and appearance were everything. And yet I know they are not. But I can't help it. Now I have seen three real nice gentlemen, I know I can never make up my mind to marry a plain farmer like my dear daddy. I shall have to be an old maid, that's all."

Having come to this wise conclusion, Mary resolved

to dismiss the subject of love and lovers from her mind. She went to Edith and said she was longing for something to do. Edith proposed the task of dusting the books and the book shelves, and Mary, armed with a duster and a feather brush, got through the morning with much satisfaction to herself. She had finished her task and was brushing the dust off her dress, when George Pennefather was announced as having come to see her.

Mary was in no hurry to meet him; she made believe that there was a great deal of dust to brush off, and wished there were any way of escape. As she supposed, Cousin George was going away, and had come to bid her goodbye. That was more than she could have expected from him, but she was conscious of feeling not one particle of gratitude to him on that account. His voice, jerky, loud, imperative, resounded from the verandah where he was sitting, through the half-closed shutters of Mary's window. Mary stopped with the brush in her hand. "He is actually laying down the law to Mrs. Tregellas, and he has not been two minutes in the house!" Mary said to herself, aghast at his bad taste and ill-breeding.

"I've no opinion of the place, ma'am, none whatever," he was saying. "America or England, I don't care. I don't care a tuppence. I'm a practical farmer, ma'am, and I know good wheat land when I see it. I'm sorry for you all, I am, upon my life. It will be so much money sunk. I've a great mind to write to the *Times* as soon as I get home. I think it's the duty of every practical man to expose a humbug when he sees it."

Then Edith's soft voice said something about Mr.

Ellacombe; and Cousin George, rough and peremptory, broke in with—

"Mr. Ellacombe, ma'am? Oh yes, Mr. Ellacombe has been a good farmer in his day; old fashioned, you understand, but safe. Oh yes, Mr. Ellacombe was a good enough farmer. But he must ha' been in his dotage when he took up the notion of settling here."

Mary could bear no more. She walked out at once on the verandah and stood before her cousin with flashing eyes and hot cheeks.

"I have heard every word you said," she cried, "every word!"

George got up slowly from his chair. He had seated himself in a little low chair that was generally preferred by Mrs. Tregellas, and which was suited to her size and weight. It was a striking demonstration of the unfitness of things when such a man as George got into such a little chair.

The little chair groaned and creaked just like the chair in Mrs. Ellacombe's parlour. But George was not in the least disconcerted. His hat seemed glossier, and his clothes newer, and his tie of a brighter, more aggressive blue if that were possible, than on the day of his arrival. "You heard what I said?" he rejoined coolly. "Well, I didn't know you were within hearing, else, may be, I'd not have said it. But what I say I always stand to. Shake hands, Mary, I don't bear you malice."

Mary put her hands behind her. "I would rather not," she said.

"As you please," said George with a laugh. "I didn't know you were so touchy. Why Mary, you and I used to be great friends. What's come to you? Are you grown too fine a lady for Cousin George?"

"I am not a fine lady," Mary cried, "and I would not be one if I could. You know I would not."

"Then shake hands and don't be touchy," said he. Thus adjured, what could Mary do but give her hand? George gave it a hearty squeeze. "There!" he said, "that's better. Now we're comfortable again, ain't we?"

Mary said sincerely enough that she hoped so. Then George told her what he had before told Mrs. Tregellas, that he was going away in the afternoon and had come to say goodbye.

"You have not stayed long. Father will be sorry," said Mary. That she was sorry she could not prevail on herself to say; for she was thinking that if ever a man possessed the art of making himself disagreeable, that man was Cousin George.

At that moment Batheenie's voice came from the kitchen yard, shouting, "Oh! Miss Edith! Oh, Miss Edith!" and Edith begging Mary to excuse her, rose and left the verandah.

"So that's one of your fine lady friends," said Cousin George, as soon as she was out of sight.

"Don't you say a word against her," said Mary hotly. "For I am very fond of her, and I won't stand it."

George laughed. "Well, you're right to stick up for your friends. I'm not the man to quarrel with you for doing that. With you it will be 'Love me, love my dog,' I'll be bound."

Mary said she hoped it would always be so.

"But," George rejoined, "she ain't the sort to teach you to be a good farmer's wife. I can see that much."

"Who says I'm to be a farmer's wife, or anybody's wife?" cried Mary, bridling up. "I think you take a great deal upon you, Cousin George."

George smiled and said perhaps he did. Perhaps he meant to take a good deal more upon him before he was done with it. That depended on circumstances. Then he got up and stretched himself and complained of feeling cramped (which was not wonderful), and proposed a stroll. He had—well—a little matter of business which might be settled in a few minutes if Mary would give him her attention.

"Business!" said Mary. "I'm no hand at business. Had you not better speak to mother—or to father?"

"It's all settled as far as they are concerned," said George. "Get your hat and come along, Mary. I shall not be long."

He looked at his watch and muttered that he should have plenty of time.

"But don't be an hour putting on your hat," he added.

Mary hesitated. "Cannot you say what you want to say here, if you are in a hurry?"

But George again bade her get her hat, and stood smoothing the top of his own till she returned.

"H—m. There's my good little Mary once more," said he, drawing her hand under his arm.

They strolled away from the house, taking the path

which Mary had taken with Raine the day before. George looking round, observed that he detested the sight of kalmia bushes.

"Oh," cried Mary, "you should see them in May. They are lovely."

"They ain't lovely when the sheep eat 'em and get poisoned," said George. Then he looked in another direction, and remarked that there was some fairly good timber—would be better if it had been thinned.

"Nature didn't think about that, I suppose," said Mary.

"You're right. Nature did not. What would that timber fetch, now?" Mary was obliged to confess her ignorance. She only knew the price of butter and eggs. George seemed interested, and made her tell him exactly how many pounds of butter and how many dozens of eggs she disposed of one month with another. Mary told him, wondering why he should care to know, he who had expressed such contempt for Harmonia and such pity for its inhabitants.

"You would not make such a bad farmer's wife after all," he said, when she had told him all she knew.

The tone of patronage jarred on Mary; but she reflected that perhaps he could not help it. At any rate she would not begin a fresh quarrel now, as he must be gone very shortly, and she might perhaps never see him again.

"What do you think about it, Mary?" he asked, laying his hand on the hand which he held within his arm.

"Think about what?" said Mary, who was wondering what the price of timber and butter and eggs had to do with the business on which George wished to speak.

"About being a farmer's wife," said he.

"I have not thought about it at all."

"Come, come! You've thought about it just like other girls, I suppose. You haven't seen 'Mr. Right' yet, eh? But you expect to see him, some day."

"I am perfectly happy at home. Why should I think about marrying? They don't want to get rid of me."

"Yes, of course. That's all very well," said George, patting her hand approvingly. "But a day will come when you will feel quite otherwise. And, anyhow, you may not always have the home you have now."

"Cousin George!" Mary withdrew her hand and stood before him pale with apprehension. "You haven't noticed anything the matter with father?"

"There's nothing the matter that I know by," said George in a matter of fact tone that did more to re-assure her than the actual words. "Nothing the matter more than there is with all of us. We're all mortal, here to-day and gone to-morrow. The old man appears remarkably hale, and the Ellacombes are a long-lived stock. And temperance is all in his favour, of course," Cousin George added, drawing Mary's hand again within his arm.

She murmured that he had startled her, but she did not resist. Indeed, she hardly noticed his action, and her hand lay quite passive within his arm. If what he had to say was not about her father, what was it? Mary asked. She could not bear to be startled and made to imagine that all sorts of dreadful things were going to happen.

"Well, Mary," said George, with a preliminary

clearing of his throat, "I've been a good deal interested in your welfare. We ought not to be like strangers to each other, ought we?"

Mary murmured something which George took for assent; for he continued:—"I've been thinking what a good thing it would be if you were settled in life. And I thought—now don't start away—'tis nothing alarming—I thought that, though you're a good bit younger than I, you suit me, on the whole, better than any other girl I've seen. Well,—there, I don't mind saying that you suit me to a T. And I'll make you a loving husband if you're like-minded, Mary. Now, don't be hasty; don't be rash. Take time. I dare say you didn't expect this. Take time." For Mary had snatched away her hand and had uttered an impatient "No!"

"I don't want time," she cried. "I don't know whether I suit you, but I know you do not suit me."

As she spoke, she turned to walk back to the house. George followed her and would again have taken her hand. "I do believe you have a temper of your own," said he, amused as a man might be at a child's pettish airs, when she refused it.

They walked on till they were opposite the draw-bars where George had left the buggy.

"Look here," he said, stopping and laying his hand on her arm so that she must perforce stop. "That was a hasty answer you gave me just now. I'm not in haste, myself. No good was ever got by hurrying things. I'm willing to give you a month—six months, if you like, to think of what I've said. And—remember

this, Mary. I'm a man that will stick to my bargain, once I've made it. None can say of me that I ever failed to stick to my bargain. There's no shilly-shally about me. Don't you get uppish notions into your head, for I tell you they'll never bring you any good. Now then !—not so fast. Give me a kiss and let us part friends."

But Mary broke from him and ran towards the house. He did not follow her, but got into the buggy and drove away.

"She'll come to it. She'll come to it. A bit skittish, like all young things. Wants careful handling, of course. But she'll come to it after a bit. It's just as well I got on the right side of the old people first," was George's soliloquy as he drove slowly up the hill.

END OF VOL. I.

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